
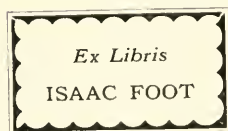


THE POEMS
OF
ROSAMUND
MARRIOTT
WATSON



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POEMS



Theresa and Harriett Watson

THE POEMS
OF ROSAMUND (E211)
MARRIOTT WATSON
///

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TO
H. B. & R. B.
MARRIOTT WATSON



INTRODUCTION

ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON passed from this earthly life on the Twenty-ninth of December, 1911. She had prepared, for issue in the spring of this year, a volume of new poems, which was already in the publisher's hands. But that mortal change in her life seemed to demand and urge a larger, a completer appeal on behalf of her genius. It became desirable to put on record determinately, perhaps definitively, the full body of her poetical work. This volume, then, comprises all in that kind which she would deem worthy of preservation. And yet I am not sure that this is exactly true; for the first section of this book consists of the contents of a very early volume, "Tares," published anonymously when the writer was only a girl; and I do not think that she herself set a high value on this. I have, however, included it here, partly because it seems fit to inaugurate the corpus of her poetical work with these juvenilia, and partly also out of respect for the judgment of many literary friends who have esteemed these poems so greatly as to wish them retained in the collected edition.

The arrangement of the book is chronological ; that is to say, the different sections are printed here in sequence, as they appeared in the original volumes, and under their several titles. In all they cover a period of nearly thirty years. Outside the anonymous volume the first work emerged to the public under the auspices of Mr. Andrew Lang, at "The Sign of the Ship," in *Longman's Magazine*. This was her earliest welcome, at least in this country. But very soon the knowledge and appreciation of her work extended, and she was an honoured guest in many magazines and journals, both here and in America, principally the *National Observer*, under Mr. W. E. Henley's editorship, *Macmillan's*, *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, and *The Athenæum*. The first-fruits in book-form of this poetic work was "A Bird-Bride," published in 1889. There followed "A Summer Night" (1891), "Vespertilia" (1895), and "After Sunset" (1904). "Marpessa" has never before been reprinted from the pages of the magazine in which it appeared in 1889.

The last section, "The Lamp and the Lute," is that which was to have been published separately this spring, and appears as arranged by the author. She had prefixed to this the dedication which I have transferred to the front of the collected poems, knowing that this would be, and indeed is, her desire.

Some poems in this part were included in "The Heart of a Garden" (1906), and are here reprinted

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It is not for me to proffer here my opinion of my wife's poems, if only for the reason that I should be considered to approach the witness-box with prepossessions. My faith in their beauty and their immortal quality is ardent. And having said so much I stand aside, content to leave them to the judgment of her contemporaries, and, as I hope and surely believe, to the appreciation of posterity.

H. B. MARRIOTT WATSON.

SHERE, *May 5th*, 1912.

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POEMS

TARES

HERBSTLIED

FAREWELL, my love, I love so well !
My sweetheart, lost as soon as won !
Sweet summer idyll, scarce begun—
Farewell !

Good-bye brown fields, and wind-swept skies,
With mellow sunset all aglow :
Unto the bitter north I go—
Good-bye !

Ah me, dear heart, Auf Wiederseh'n !
Surely one day we'll meet again ;
And lest our hope relinquished be,
This watchword give Mnemosyne—
“Auf Wiederseh'n !”

EHEU FUGACES!

LIGHT and soft they flutter down,
Faded gauds from Autumn's crown :
Still they fall
With a slow, pathetic grace,
Touching now my hands, my face ;
Now—the wall.

“Ohne Hast und ohne Rast,”
Chill and grey the years have passed,
Ay de mi !
By this old red orchard wall
One fair face I still recall—
Almost see !

Ah, that still September day !
Bravely seemed the world and gay
To us then.
Then, we stood together here ;
Now, the leaves fall, brown and sere,
Once again.

Worn and weary, old and grey,
Altered seems the world to-day—
Mine the blame ;
For I see with time-dimmed eyes,
Though the kind autumnal skies
Smile the same.

Pure as winsome, fair as true ;
Hard the fate that lost me you—
Oh, my dear !
Still I see you leaning there,
With the dead leaves on your hair,
Far, yet near.

My Neæra—vainly sought !
What to you has fortune brought
 Since we met ?
Love or hatred, dole or glee ?
But her only gift to me
 Is—regret !

A TRIPTYCH

LINGERING, sad and slow,
When the winter sun is low
And the great clouds westward roll,
Calls the sea's voice to my soul ;
With a strange insistence cries,
Till old faces round me rise,
And I taste the salt free wind,
And the spell of the Undefined.
When the languorous days are long
Comes to me a tender song,
Making soft moan in mine ear—
Then the whisper of leaves I hear ;
And Philomel's yearning strain
Through the warm dusk wails again ;
For the dim woods call to me
In sweet hushed melody.
But the third voice speaks gay and loud,
For it calls me back to the crowd
And the city's Circe-charm ;
There breathes no brooding calm,
But the waters of Lethe flow,
Drowning the long ago,
And I lose in the roar of the street
Sounds of retreating feet.

EIDOTHE ?

IN very deed and truth did our souls once meet?

If your eyes lied not, yes ; but I may not know,
Never may hold the surety that it was so,
But the thought alone is sweet.

Bitterly sweet ; for the knowledge would come too late.
Do I dream now, or was blind in the bygone time—
Blind, and passed by without knowing our season's prime ?
Ah, woefully blind is Fate !

Child, was it more with us then than the oft-told tale
(Old as all summers past, even as this one, new) ?
More than the butterfly life the evening slew,
Yet pure from the serpent's trail ?

Perchance, who knows ?—yet I think that our souls knew
best,
Just for a moment, I think ; in this wise spoke,
“ I have sought you long, and now—” Here the spell broke.
Shall we ever hear the rest ?

Ah, well-a-day ! for our brief day is dead,
Bright with light laughter, and sun, and tinkling mirth.
Chance and the world's cult stifled the spirit-birth,
Though one hour our souls were one.

NIRVANA

SLEEP will He give His beloved ?

Not dreams, but the precious guerdon of deepest rest ?
Aye, surely ! Look on the grave-closed eyes,

And cold hands folded on tranquil breast.

Will *not* the All-Great be just, and forgive ?

For He knows (though we make no prayer nor cry)
How our lone souls ached when our pale star waned,

How we watch the promiseless sky.

Life hereafter ? Ah no ! we have lived enough.

Life eternal ? Pray God it may *not* be so.

Have we not suffered and striven, loved and endured,

Run through the whole wide gamut of passion and woe ?

.

Strangest illusion ! sprung from a fevered habit of hope,

Wild enthusiast's dream of blatant perfection at best.

Give us darkness for anguished eyes, stillness for weary feet,

Silence, and sleep ; but no heaven of glittering, loud unrest.

No more the lifelong labour of smoothing the stone-strewn
way ;

No more the shuddering outlook athwart the sterile plain,
Where every step we take, every word we say,

Each warm, living hand that we cling to, is but a fence
against pain.

.

And nothing may perish, but lives again ? Where ? Out
of thought, out of sight ?

And where is your cresset's flame that the rough wind slew
last night ?

OLD PAULINE

SO your boys are going to Paris? That's how I lost my own.

Lonely? Ah yes, but I know it, the old are always alone. You remember my boys, Euphrasie? No? Was it before your day?

Each, when his turn came, kissed me, and cried; but they went away.

How I longed for them, always, vainly! and thought of them, early and late;

I would start and look round in the pasture if any one clicked the gate.

But a greater sorrow fell on me: my Marie, with eyes so blue,

Grew restless, poor bird! in the home-nest—she must seek her fortune too.

And, once the desire is on them, 'tis a fever, they cannot stay;

And Marie, my poor little Marie! well, I missed her one bright spring day.

'Twas *then* that my heart broke, 'Phrasie, for my children gay and tall,

For fair, vile, glittering Paris had taken them all.

Yet the good God is merciful always; I live, and I have no pain,

Only the old dumb longing for the children home again.

Still I watch the road to the city, up the glistening sun-set track,

But they never come back, Euphrasie—never come back!

ULTIMA THULE

I MUST sail to-night on the changeful sea,
To far Goshen's Land ;
Sweetheart, now wilt thou go with me ?
Reach me thine hand.
Here, the wind sobs and the death-cold rain
Drenches my heart,
Weird voices mock me ; they cry in vain
That we dwell apart ;
They moan that you never loved me, dear,
That you died untrue ;
But I will not listen, I will not hear.
Let us go—we two.
Come, let us mount (it is none too soon)
The galleon's side ;
There is light at last, for a crystal moon
Gleams on the tide.
So, how silent we sail, and swift,
We have left behind
Lying voices, and wild rain-drift,
And the weary wind.
A mist-hued light begins to dawn,
Nor dusk nor day,
Soft reflection of glory born
Of a night in May.
All past perfection, each gracious thought,
Is garnered here ;
Lo, we land at last in the dear dim port
Of Yesteryear.
How the air is tender with old regrets !
Look round and see.
Here, oh my love, grow the violets
You gave to me ;

And that sunset's wraith, that stole gleaming through
The magnolia bloom ;
And the scented geranium plant that grew
In a sweet, still room ;
With the music, too, that dwelt therein.
Do you forget
The pure, faint voice, so fresh and thin
Of your old spinet ?
But the odorous earth beneath our feet,
Is all firm and sure ;
This is the past, we will dwell here, sweet,
For evermore !

ECHOES

WHERE is the scent of the flowers we gathered
When your rose garden was all aglow,
And the air too heavy almost with sweetness?
Gone, as surely as last year's snow.
Masses of odorous cream and golden,
Deepest crimson and faintest pink;
And the scent of one blood-red rose you gave me,
I shall never forget, I think.
Where is the sound of the songs you sang then
(You on the terrace, and I within)?
How fair you looked, with the sky behind you,
Idly touching your mandolin!
Not classic, no, but your voice was tender,
Tears sounded through, though the songs were gay,
'Twas as if you had stretched out your hand and touched me,
It had such a passionate, pleading way.
Quaint, soft *Lieder*, recalling the pinewoods,
Snatches of tinkling serenade,
But one strange, keen note from an old *Stornello*,
All these years in my soul has stayed.
And some day, I think, be it yule or summer,
Rain or sunshine, by land or sea,
The faint, sad perfume of those dead roses,
Their soul that still lives, will steal back to me.
And one day I know, in some soft still weather,
When pale light stays in an opal sky,
I shall hear that note from our old *Stornello*,
Wandering back from the days gone by.

BEYOND

DIVIDED! yes, best so, though narrow the gulf that
parts her way and mine;
Easily overstepped, but once crossed, it would widen be-
hind us,
Widen and yawn at the back-turned feet—mine Love, or
thine?
Come, let us count the cost (what matter? the chance is
over),
And I lie in the still blue weather, and watch the shimmer-
ing sea,
The cicala shrills in mine ear, I can count the seeds on the
grasses,
That sway 'tween my eyes and the sky, and the south wind
sighs to me.
Verily better so, with half the world's width between us,
Idle indeed to dream of the past, or the might have been;
Yet I, lying here in the sun, steeped in the spell of the lotus,
Conceive the renounced fruition, shadow forth actors and scene.
Chill ghosts of honour and love, with faces that may not be
veiled,
Wide, stricken eyes, whose shamed glances may not be
turned;
Corruption of all that was purest, death of that which was
highest,
Only the dull grey ashes where once the red fire burned.
Weary decadence! the present heart-hunger *is* better,
Untouched the fruit still swings on the bending bough
Mellow and fair of hue. If within it be dust and ashes,
Yet I will not dream that it is not, for I never shall taste it now.
Never, ah no, of a surety. The tender light of illusion
Shines unsullied for aye, through the dusk of my life's dim
room,
Only a glimmer; nay, but say, only a beacon,
Pallid, but steady and pure, as the sacred lamp in a tomb.

BITTERSWEET

BITTER is life, I said,
My soul lies cold and dead,
Secretly, foully slain,
Never to stir again
With Love's own self at strife.
Bitter is life !

Art indeed dead, my heart ?
Stilled all thy woe and smart
(Victor, yet vanquished quite),
Buried from love and light ?

Dear Voice from out the past,
Callest thou then at last ?
Wake, my heart, wake !
Live, for old love's sake.
Haply we still may meet,
Life is full sweet !

VOR LANGER ZEIT

DEEP, tender eyes, remembrance-fraught, unseeing,
Looking on dim fields through the twilight haze ;
(Ah, strangely sweet, thrilling through all her Being,
Come back the bygone days).

“ Dear days, mine only, to be cancelled—never,
You cannot die, for my life lives in you ;
The love that gave you life is mine forever,
Infinite, perfect, true.

Dear Love, nor death nor distance may bereave us ;
Our Fates are powerless to snatch one day—
Ev’n their insatiate vengeance this must leave us ;
Our Past is ours, for aye.

Ah, but sometimes, dear, in the sweet spring weather,
Comes a wild, helpless longing to be free ;
Then I can only know we *were* together,
And that it may not be.”

Sad eyes, sweet eyes, the fields are dark and lonely,
The subtle glamour of the gloaming, sped ;
Wake, and turn in unto the firelight, only
Bury once more your dead.

A GREY DAY

WEEP, heavy sky ;
Wail, weary winter wind ;
Frown, bitter world, for, be thou curst or kind,
I care not now—not I.

Only last year
Shone bright blue weather ; memory-haunted May
Through the wet woodlands made sweet holyday.
Mavis and merle sang clear.

But I beheld not. No ;
Mine eyes saw none of these fair outward things,
Marked not the chestnut's sheath, nor woodbine's rings,
Nor slim swan sailing slow.

Blinded with tears went I,
And all in vain for me were roses fair,
Summer's warm breath that soft caressed my hair,
And the sun's alchemy.

Yea, autumn smiled
(Sweet, mournful autumn in her russet gown),
With fresh, cool airs, and sad leaves swooning down,
And tender skies and mild.

I knew not then,
And yet remember all these things were so,
Even as old music, heeded not, we know,
What time it sounds again.

But now *I know* ;
And that old music, idly set apart,
Comes flooding back and quickens in my heart,
Thrilling, and wild, and low.

Ah, sky so grey !
What matter, since my love, my love is true ?
I wept, when thou wert brave in gala hue ;
But I am glad to-day.

“BE TRUE TO ME, AS I TO THEE”

(*Ring Posy*)

BE true, ah, twin soul of my soul, be true !

Be true to me, as I must be to thee,
So that I, tossing on the storm-swept sea,
Still one sure star may view.

Be true, dear heart, for mine is bruised and sore,
Weary of all, save only thy sweet love ;
Only to thee my bitter longings move
Ever, and evermore.

Would I might lean my head against thy breast,
Even as a child sore-vexed with thorny ways,
With aching feet, turns sobbing to its rest,
And there, contented, stays.

That may not be, but be thou true to me ;
So may I still my hopeless fancy please ;
My empty arms outstretchèd aye to thee
In visions such as these.

Ah, sweetheart mine ! our dead past liveth yet—
Blossoms afresh, more bravely than of old ;
Yet must I plead (for great dread maketh bold),
Never do thou forget !

NACHTSTÜCK

I WILL lie still here in the shadow, and turn my face to
the wall ;

Mine eyes shall behold no other, since they may not mirror you ;
Since I may not hear your voice, mine ears shall be sealèd too ;
And my lips are mute to all.

But you, oh my fair, sweet love ! you must walk far afield
in the light,

Not quite forgetting my soul that aches in the darkness here,
Though Time's soft dead hand puts me from you, each day
less dear

Grow the tender mem'ries of night.

And that shall be well, I am only a wraith of the past ;
No more may my glad arms cradle your drooped gold head ;
To you—and because to you to all—am I henceforth dead.
(And you knew not that kiss was our last ?)

And that is well too—to the last was our summer sweet
To the very end, no pale cloud obscured our exquisite days ;
Our sun, for the last time, set in a warm, wild blaze,
Making earth and heaven meet.

False ? Ah no, hardly that. Dear heart, you are *not* to blame.
(Who carps at the sun, or the soft spring rain, or the
gracious evening dew ?)

And I cavil not at your fair young soul, that would fain, but
could not, be true,

And I love you aye the same.

That you do not ask it, I know ; and I would not, alas !
but must,

Prometheus-wise chained and tortured for ever. But you,
dear, are free,

And the welcomest gift that this wide blank universe holds
for me

Is a little handful of dust.

RECONCILIATION

LIKE opals set in lead
Lie soft little clouds in the dull grey sky.
We are all alone here, you and I—
And they say you are dead.

Like the ray-kissed breast of a dove
Leans the weary moon on yon dim cloud's rim,
And the tall tree-shadows swim weird and grim
Over your still face, love.

The wan moon quickens your hair
Till I almost believe that you breathe again!
(Cold Earth, are you sure of your infinite gain?
Is she not passing fair?)

.

Black as the storm-scourged lea,
Spreads the blind blank pall of the empty sky.
I wonder, just now did I hear you sigh?
Ah, listen! this once, to me.

Perchance, later on you might speak,
(The moon sleeps sound, there is no one near)
And my hand clasps yours in the darkness, dear,
My head to your cheek.

Once, I doubted you—yes;
And this (had you lived) you had never known,
I had trusted you, told you (let this atone!)
More, had I loved you less.

Thanatos, healer of all !
You have wedded once more my Soul and me,
Whelmed and washed down with a wild salt sea
Th' implacable ice-wall.

So. I kiss her gracious brow ;
There is peace between us. The faint, sick dawn
Creeps shivering in ; great rain tears mourn ;
But we know each other—now.

THE BIRD-BRIDE

BALLAD OF THE BIRD-BRIDE

(ESKIMO)

THEY never come back, though I loved them well ;
I watch the South in vain ;
The snow-bound skies are blear and grey,
Waste and wide is the wild gull's way,
And she comes never again.

Years ago, on the flat white strand,
I won my sweet sea-girl :
Wrapped in my coat of the snow-white fur,
I watched the wild birds settle and stir,
The grey gulls gather and whirl.

One, the greatest of all the flock,
Perched on an ice-floe bare,
Called and cried as her heart were broke,
And straight they were changed, that fleet bird-folk,
To women young and fair.

Swift I sprang from my hiding-place
And held the fairest fast ;
I held her fast, the sweet, strange thing :
Her comrades skirled, but they all took wing,
And smote me as they passed.

I bore her safe to my warm snow house ;
Full sweetly there she smiled ;

And yet, whenever the shrill winds blew,
She would beat her long white arms anew,
And her eyes glanced quick and wild.

But I took her to wife, and clothed her warm
With skins of the gleaming seal;
Her wandering glances sank to rest
When she held a babe to her fair, warm breast,
And she loved me dear and leal.

Together we tracked the fox and the seal,
And at her behest I swore
That bird and beast my bow might slay
For meat and for raiment, day by day,
But never a grey gull more.

A weariful watch I keep for aye
'Mid the snow and the changeless frost:
Woe is me for my broken word!
Woe, woe's me for my bonny bird,
My bird and the love-time lost!

Have ye forgotten the old keen life?
The hut with the skin-strewn floor?
O winged white wife, and children three,
Is there no room left in your hearts for me,
Or our home on the low sea-shore?

Once the quarry was scarce and shy,
Sharp hunger gnawed us sore,
My spoken oath was clean forgot,
My bow twanged thrice with a swift, straight shot,
And slew me sea-gulls four.

The sun hung red on the sky's dull breast,
The snow was wet and red;
Her voice shrilled out in a woeful cry,
She beat her long white arms on high,
"The hour is here," she said.

She beat her arms, and she cried full fain
As she swayed and wavered there.
“Fetch me the feathers, my children three,
Feathers and plumes for you and me,
Bonny grey wings to wear!”

They ran to her side, our children three,
With the plumage black and grey;
Then she bent her down and drew them near,
She laid the plumes on our children dear,
’Mid the snow and the salt sea-spray.

“Babes of mine, of the wild wind’s kin,
Feather ye quick, nor stay.
Oh, oh! but the wild winds blow!
Babes of mine, it is time to go:
Up, dear hearts, and away!”

And lo! the grey plumes covered them all,
Shoulder and breast and brow.
I felt the wind of their whirling flight:
Was it sea or sky? was it day or night?
It is always night-time now.

Dear, will you never relent, come back?
I loved you long and true.
O winged white wife, and our children three,
Of the wild wind’s kin though ye surely be,
Are ye not of my kin too?

Ay, ye once were mine, and, till I forget,
Ye are mine forever and aye,
Mine, wherever your wild wings go,
While shrill winds whistle across the snow
And the skies are blear and grey.

BALLAD OF PENTYRE TOWN

(CORNISH)

TO E. A. S.

FOAM flies white over rocks of black,
Nights are dark when the boats go down ;
But souls flit back in the wild wind's track,
And grey gulls gather in Pentyre Town.

Wild, grey gulls in the narrow street,
Wheeling, wavering, to and fro,
(Dear the echo of banished feet !)
Flocking in as the sun sinks low.

Pale she stands at her open door,
(Dark little streets of a fishing town ;)
Shrill, thin voices from sea and shore
Fill the air as the sun goes down.

"Out and alas for my woe !" saith she,
(See how the grey gulls whirl and throng !)
"Love ! Come back from the weary sea !"
(Sore is sorrow and hours are long.)

One comes sailing with outstretched beak,
White throat lifted in wailing cry,
Stoops his wing to a woman's cheek,
Swift and light, as he wavers by.

Foam flies white over rocks of black,
Nights are dark when the boats go down ;
But souls flit back in the wild wind's track,
And grey gulls gather in Pentyre Town.

Still she stands at her open door,
 (Flickering sun rays faint and far,)
"Woe is heavy and doubt is sore,"
 (Sobbing waves on the dull Doom Bar.)
"Sleep flees far from mine eyes," saith she,
 (Skies are wild with the rough wind's breath,)
"All for my love's voice calling me,"
 (Robbed Love clings at the knees of Death.)

Now she strays on the wind-swept strand,
 "Fair our wandering days shall be!"
Sets her foot on the wan wet sand,
 (Faint feet falter, but wings flash free.)

"Love, I come to your call at last."
 (Black boats lean on the low seashore.)
"Fear and doubting are overpast,"
 (Set the tiller, and grasp the oar!)

No boat stirs on the sea's dark breast,
 (Long clouds writhe on a pallid sky,)
Storm-winds wail to the lurid West,
 Sad and shrill as a seabird's cry.

Foam flies white over rocks of black,
 Daylight dies, and a boat goes down;
But souls flit back in the wild wind's track,
 And grey gulls gather in Pentyre Town.

LE MAUVAIS LARRON

(SUGGESTED BY WILLETTE'S PICTURE)

THE moorland waste lay hushed in the dusk of the second day,
Till a shuddering wind and shrill moaned up through the twilight grey;
Like a wakening wraith it rose from the grave of the buried sun,
And it whirled the sand by the tree—(there was never a tree but one—)
But the tall bare bole stood fast, unswayed with the mad wind's stress,
And a strong man hung thereon in his pain and his nakedness.
His feet were nailed to the wood, and his arms strained over his head;
'Twas the dusk of the second day, and yet was the man not dead.
The cold blast lifted his hair, but his limbs were set and stark,
And under their heavy brows his eyes stared into the dark:
He looked out over the waste, and his eyes were as coals of fire,
Lit up with anguish and hate, and the flame of a strong desire.
The dark blood sprang from his wounds, the cold sweat stood on his face,
For over the darkening plain came a rider riding apace.
Her rags flapped loose in the wind; the last of the sunset glare
Flung dusky gold on her brow and her bosom broad and bare.

She was haggard with want and woe, on a jaded steed astride,
And still, as it staggered and strove, she smote on its heaving
side,

Till she came to the limbless tree where the tortured man
hung high—

A motionless crooked mass on a yellow streak in the sky.

“’Tis I—I am here, Antoine—I have found thee at last,”
she said ;

“O the hours have been long, but long ! and the minutes as
drops of lead.

Have they trapped thee, the full-fed flock, thou wert wont to
harry and spoil ?

Do they laugh in their town secure o’er their measures of
wine and oil ?

Ah God ! that these hands might reach where they loll in
their rich array ;

Ah God, that they were but mine, all mine, to mangle and
slay !

How they shuddered and shrank, erewhile, at the sound of
thy very name,

When we lived as the grey wolves live, whom torture nor
want may tame :

And thou but a man ! and still a scourge and a terror to men,
Yet only my lover to me, my dear, in the rare days then.

O years of revel and love ! ye are gone as the wind goes by,
He is snared and shorn of his strength, and the anguish of
hell have I—

I am here, O love, at thy feet ; I have ridden far and fast
To gaze in thine eyes again, and to kiss thy lips at the last.”

She rose to her feet and stood upright on the gaunt mare’s
back,

And she pressed her full red lips to his that were strained
and black.

“Good-night, for the last time now—good-night, beloved,
and good-bye—”

And his soul fled into the waste between a kiss and a sigh.

DEID FOLKS' FERRY

'TIS They, of a veritie—
 They are calling thin an' shrill ;
 We maun rise an' put to sea,
 We maun gi'e the deid their will,
 We maun ferry them owre the faem,
 For they draw us as they list ;
 We maun bear the deid folk hame
 Through the mirk an' the saft sea-mist.

" But how can I gang the nicht,
 When I'm new come hame frae sea ?
 When my heart is sair for the sicht
 O' my lass that lang's for me ? "
 " O your lassie lies asleep,
 An' sae do your bairnies twa ;
 The cliff-path's stey an' steep,
 An' the deid folk cry an' ca'."

O sae hooly steppit we,
 For the nicht was mirk an' lown,
 Wi' never a sign to see,
 But the voices all aroun'.
 We laid to the saut sea-shore,
 An' the boat dipped low i' th' tide,
 As she micht hae dipped wi' a score,
 An' our ain three sel's beside.

O the boat she settled low,
 Till her gunwale kissed the faem,
 An' she didna loup nor row
 As she bare the deid folk hame ;
 But she aye gaed swift an' licht,
 An' we naething saw nor wist
 Wha sailed i' th' boat that nicht
 Through the mirk an' the saft sea-mist.

There was never a sign to see,
But a misty shore an' low ;
Never a word spak' we,
But the boat she lichtened slow,
An' a cauld sigh stirred my hair,
An' a cauld hand touched my wrist,
An' my heart sank cauld an' sair
I' the mirk an' the saft sea-mist.

Then the wind raise up wi' a maen,
('Twas a waefu' wind, an' weet),
Like a deid saul wud wi' pain,
Like a bairnie wild wi' freit ;
But the boat rade swift an' licht,
Sae we wan the land fu' sune.
An' the shore showed wan an' white
By a glint o' the waning mune.

We steppit oot owre the sand
Where an unco' tide had been,
An' Black Donald caught my hand
An' coverit up his een :
For there, in the wind an' weet,
Or ever I saw nor wist,
My Jean an' her weans lay cauld at my feet,
In the mirk an' the saft sea-mist.

An' it's O for my bonny Jean !
An' it's O for my bairnies twa,
It's O an' O for the watchet een
An' the steps that are gane awa'—
Awa' to the Silent Place,
Or ever I saw nor wist,
Though I wot we twa went face to face
Through the mirk an' the saft sea-mist.

THE CRUEL PRIEST

IT was at the court o' the gude Scots King
That a waefu' thing befell:
'Tis of a lover and his lady;
Loved ilk the other well.

There cam' a lord frae the South Countrie,
And a gudely lord was he;
His sword-sheath was o' the beaten gowd,
The haft o' the ivory.

And aye he spak' o' his gowd and gear,
And his lands in the South Countrie,
But never he spak' o' his faith and troth,
That were plight to a fair lady.

Oh, then was our gude King right fain:
"In a gude time cam' he here;
Braid lands hath he in the South Countrie—
He shall wed my daughter dear!"

He's called to him his little foot-page;
"Gae rin, gae rin," quoth he,
"And see that ye carry this braid letter
To the lord frae the South Countrie!"

Then up and spak' the Southland lord—
And ho, but his cheek waxed red—
"Oh, I wadna wed the King's daughter
Though a' but her were dead!"

"Gae back, gae back to your King," he said,
"And this word gie frae me:
My heart and my hand are no my ain,
Nor yet for that fair lady."

Then back cam' he, that little foot-page,
And knelt down on his knee :
"Oh, will ye wed wi' the King's daughter,
Or will ye be hangit hie ?"

"Oh, where, oh, where is my gude grey steed ?
Oh, where are my merry men a' ?
Oh, would I were far frae this ill countrie,
At hame in my father's ha' !

"But gin I maun wed this outland maid
An ill death may she die !
She may ware her love on him she will ;
She's get nae love frae me."

Then bells were rung and mass was sung,
And ready stude the priest,
But deid in her bower lay the King's daughter,
With a wide wound in her breist !

Then a wofu' man was our gude King,
And the saut tear filled his ee :
"Now streak the corp, ye Four Maries,¹
And busk her in cramoisie.

"And you that wished my daughter dead
Your bridal yet shall be.
This very night ye's be wed," he said,
"And the morn ye's be hangit hie !"

Then by cam' the bride's company
Wi' torches burning bright.
"Tak' up, tak' up your bonny bride
A' in the mirk midnight !"

¹ Four Maries. This title for a lady's waiting-woman is by no means confined, in the ballads, to Mary Seton, Mary Beaton, Mary Carmichael, and Mary Hamilton, the ladies of Mary Stuart.

Oh, wan, wan was the bridegroom's face
And wan, wan was the bride,
But clay-cauld was the young mess priest
That stood them twa beside !

Says, " Rax me out your hand, Sir Knight,
And wed her wi' this ring ; "
And the deid bride's hand it was as cauld
As ony earthly thing.

The priest he touched that lady's hand,
And never a word he said ;
The priest he touched that lady's hand,
And his ain was wet and red.

The priest he lifted his ain right hand,
And the red blood dripped and fell.
Says, " I loved ye, lady, and ye loved me ;
Sae I took your life mysel' . "

.

Oh ! red, red was the dawn o' day,
And tall was the gallows-tree :
The Southland lord to his ain has fled
And the mess-priest's hangit hie !

FRAGMENT OF THE "FAUSE BRITHER"

O THE win' blaws thro' my [ling long] hair,
An' the rain draps owre my bree ;
I've crossed the seas to my ain luv's bouir,
An' she winna speak wi' me.

.
Gin ye be her true luv Willie,
As weel I wot ye be,
Gae speir at the worms i' yon kirkyard
[They'se aiblins crack wi' ye].
He's turn'd him frae his ain luv's bouir
Wi' the saut tear in his ee,
An' he's awa' to the cauld kirkyard
As fast as he can [flee].

O what's come o' your bonny een,
That were sae braw [and bright] ?
An' what's come o' your sma' fingers,
That were sae lang an' white ?

O my bonny een are gane, Willie,
But and my fingers sma',
An' the gowden ring ye gie'd to me
Is tint [and wede awa'].

O haud your tongue o' your weeping, Willie,
For ye've been ower lang owre sea ;
I canna sleep [for the wound sae deep]
My brither gie'd to me.

THE BLIND GHOST

'TIS a marshy land and low,
This place where the dead folk be,
And, aye, as they come and go,
They shoulder and jostle me.

I feel the birds flit by,
On their soft wings flapping free,—
But groping and slow go I,
Who am blind and cannot see.

And whenever the boat comes in,
And her keel bites on the strand,
With a wavering, whispering din
The cold wraiths flock to land.

Then I rise and I grope along
To the soft dank landing-place,
Where the voices thickest throng,
And the blown spray wets my face.

The cold wraiths rustle anigh—
“Art thou come?—I am waiting yet—
I am here! do not pass me by—
I am here, May-Margaret!”

Oh, 'tis hard, and so hard to hear!
For the many voices round,
That wrangle, and weep, and jeer,
While the full barge grates aground.

Oh, I hold my breath to hear,
While the sobs rise in my throat,
And my heart throbs thick with fear
Lest she lighten from the boat,—

And I hear her not—but bide,
When her steps are passed and gone,
By the weary water-side,
Aye hearkening—aye alone.

Still they clamour and jostle me,
Still the boat fares to and fro,
And the face I may never see,
Ah, God! that my heart may know!

KING SOLOMON'S DREAM

BETWEEN the darkness and the dawn
Three signs were seen of me :
One, white as ivory new-sawn,
And greener one than wet spring grass,
And one, more red than blood (alas !
No sadder sight may be) ;
All these things verily
Mine eyes did see.

Three ladies in a twilight space
Did sit and spin away :
The first, a damsel cold of grace,
With snow-white spindle featly wove ;
The second (singing low of love),
With spindle green as bay,
Smiled soft and looked on me—
Yea—even she.

But that third lady of the three,
I might not see her face,
Or whether fair or foul was she,
For veils wound close about her head
(Both veil and spindle were blood-red) ;
And still she span apace,
Singing right joylessly,
Nor looked on me.

The first I spake with of the three,
The virgin pure and pale,
Full fair and exquisite to see,
More delicate than spring sunlight,

Crowned with closed buds of lilies white
And swathed in pearl-white veil.—
Sweet lady, even she
Did answer me !

“ When Eve, in woe and sorrow sore,
Came forth from Paradise,
The dear-bought bough her hand still bore :
She had no carven coffer fair,
Nor ivory chest, to lay it there :
The tears from her sweet eyes
Did fall to water it,
As was most fit.

“ She said, ‘ Alas ! this goodly bough
Hath cost me grievous woe ;
Yet must I guard it even now ;
Yea, surely will I plant it here.’—
Full fast the tree grew (bought so dear !)
Right large, and white as snow ;
A token stood the tree
Of Eve’s virginity.”

The maiden ceased, and turned her head ;
No word she spake again.
The second, fair with white and red,
And loose hair crowned with clustering vine,
Did turn her lustrous eyes on mine.—

“ But I of Love’s great gain,”
She said, “ of Love and Pain
Sing, not in vain.

“ Above, the snow-white branches spread ;
Below, the dewy grass—
In sooth a goodly bridal-bed—
And then the tree waxed great and green

With broad, fair leaves of glossy sheen ;
And there it came to pass
That Eve, in travail sore,
Prince Abel bore."

The third dame cried, "Ah, bitter woe!"—
Full sore a little space
She wrung her hands, then, moaning low,
She said, "Blood-red the tall tree grew
Whenso Prince Cain his brother slew :
Mild Abel, fair of face,
Where first he drew soft breath
Received the death."

She ceased, and fell to sorrowing ;
Then I—"Still sorrow ye?"
Her speech broke forth again, "O King,
In your fair garden straightly set,
That wondrous tree is growing yet."—
"And still shall these things be?"
"Even so," she answered me,
"Yea, verily."

THE FAIRIES' COBBLER

I SAT at work 'neath the lintel low,
And the white-walled street was still,
Save for the sound of my neighbour's loom,
“*Plik-a-plck-plck*,” through the twilight gloom,
And a curlew crying shrill.

The curlew cried, and I raised my head,
For I felt the good folk near ;
Slim little shapes in the fading light,
Dusk and dim, but their eyes gleamed bright,
And they hailed me thin and clear.

In they swept with a rustling sound,
Like dead leaves blown together ;
Bade me fashion their dainty shoon,
“O the morrow's e'en is the Feast o' the Moon,
And we dance on the rare white heather !”

So I took their gay stuffs, woven well,
As never a mortal weaves ;
Fashioned daintily, fashioned fair,
Little red shoon that the Pixies wear,
Of the blood-red autumn leaves.

They stood at my knee, they crowded near,
And shrilled a piping tune,
Their great eyes glowed, and they whispered “Quick !”
And my work went merrily, “tic-tac-tic,”
By the light of the yellow moon.

“Thanks and thanks for thy labour done,
And aye when the summer's o'er,
And reapers carry the last brown sheaf,
We'll send our sign of a yellow leaf,
A leaf blown in at the door,

“So shall ye know that the time hath come,
And merry at heart shall rise,
Rise and go where we flit and fleet,
Follow the track of our twinkling feet
And the glow of our golden eyes.”

They reeled away through the starlight air
And cried, “On our crystal shore,
O Friend, you shall 'scape the winter's grief :
Follow the sign of the yellow leaf,
The leaf blown in at the door !”

So shall I know when the time hath come,
And merry at heart shall rise,
Rise and go where they flit and fleet,
The little red shoon on the twinkling feet
And the glow of the golden eyes.

Winter will come with snow-stilled skies,
And the neighbours' hearths aglow ;
But the owls will drowse on my cold hearth-stone,
For I shall be gone where the birds are flown
And the great moon-daisies blow.

I sat at work 'neath the lintel low,
And the white-walled street is still ;
The twilight deepens dim and grey :
To-morrow it may be—not to-day—
And I wait the Pixies' will.

MÄRCHEN

A FERLIE cam' ben to me yestreen,
A lady jimp an' sma',
Wi' a milk-white snood an' a kirtle green ;
Yellow an' bricht were her bonny een,
An' she said, "Will ye come awa'?"

"Will ye gang wi' me to the Elfin knowe
To milk our Queenie's coo?"
"Na, na," quo' I, "I maun shear my sheep ;
I've my barn to bigg an' my corn to reap,
Sae I canna come the noo."

The ferlie skirled as she turned to gae,
For an angry elf was she,
"O a wilfu' man maun hae his way,
An' I mak' sma' doot but ye'se rue the day
That ye wouldna gang wi' me."

"O once again will ye speir at me,
An' I'll aiblins come awa'?"
"O I'll come again to your yetts," quo' she,
"When broom blaws bricht on yon rowan tree
An' the laverock sings i' th' snaw."

AN INTERLUDE

SIGHING she spoke, and leaning clasped her knees ;—
 “ Well hast thou sung of living men and dead,
 Of fair deeds done, and fair lands visited.
 Sing now of things more marvellous than these !
 Of fruits ungathered on unplanted trees,
 Of songs unsung, of gracious words unsaid,
 Of that dim shore where no man’s foot may tread,
 Of strangest skies, and unbeholden seas !
 “ Full many a golden web our longings spin,
 And days are fair, and sleep is over-sweet ;
 But passing sweet those moments rare and fleet,
 When red spring sunlight, tremulous and thin,
 Makes quick the pulses with tumultuous beat
 For meadows never won, or wandered in.”

OMAR KHAYYÁM

TO A. L.

SAYER of sooth, and Searcher of dim skies ;
 Lover of Song, and Sun, and Summertime,
 For whom so many roses bloomed and died ;
 Tender Interpreter, most sadly wise,
 Of earth’s dumb, inarticulated cries !
 Time’s self cannot estrange us, nor divide ;
 Thy hand still beckons from the garden-side,
 Through green vine-garlands, when the Winter dies.
 Thy calm lips smile on us, thine eyes are wet ;
 The nightingale’s full song sobs all through thine,
 And thine in hers,—part human, part divine !
 Among the deathless gods thy place is set,
 All-wise, but drowsy with Life’s mingled Wine,
 Laughter and Learning, Passion and Regret.

TO HERODOTUS

FAR-TRAVELLED coaster of the midland seas,
What marvels did those curious eyes behold!—

Winged snakes, and carven labyrinths of old ;
The emerald column raised to Heracles ;
King Perseus' shrine upon the Chemmian leas ;
Four-footed fishes, decked with gems and gold :
But thou didst leave some secrets yet untold,
And veiled the dread Osirian mysteries.

And now the golden asphodels among
Thy footsteps fare, and to the lordly dead
Thou tellest all the stories left unsaid
Of secret rites and runes forgotten long,
Of that dark folk who ate the Lotus-bread
And sang the melancholy Linus-song.

BOCCACCIO

NOW let yon idle tales forgotten be
(Forsaken follies of a fervid youth),
And set on high my strivings after truth ;
Lest women young and fair cry shame on me,
Saying, "for sure a graceless knave was he,
Some lewd light jongleur of the drinking-booth."

.
In vain, Boccaccio ; these are dead, in sooth—
And those, foredoomed to immortality.
But we forgive thy ribaldries, for, hark !
Pure Lisa sighs the olive-groves among ;
We see Simona smiling, venom-stung,
Sylvestra's lover lying cold and stark ;—
Death from thy viol noble songs hath wrung,
As nightingales sing loudest in the dark,

BOUCHER

“**L**EAD me this evening to my painter’s chair”
 (Dying, he said); “lay here upon my knee
 The palette—now the pencils give to me,
 And set my Venus on the easel there,
 So that the sunlight gleams upon her hair
 And her white body, risen from the sea :
 Leave us—alone awhile we twain would be ;
 I who must die, and she for ever fair.”

Above the flocking Loves, the sea’s blue rim,
 A shadow followed at the sun-rays fled ;
 Grey, up the ivory breast, the golden head,
 It stole ; but, steadfast through the twilight dim,
 Still on his idol gazed the sightless dead,
 And still the rose-crowned goddess smiled on him.

DEATH AND JUSTICE

DEATH doth not claim us with the passing breath ;
 Before your Lady Justice calm he stands,
 To hear her grave, immutable commands.
 “Wait, I shall tell you presently,” she saith ;
 “Wait but a moment’s space, my brother Death,
 While Time, our kinsman, shakes his silent sands.”
 She holds the balance true, with steady hands
 And strong, the little while it wavereth.

Hatred and Envy must lie still and wait ;
 So, now, must Love and Sorrow stand aside
 In breathless silence, pale and eager-eyed,
 Till, through the lips of Justice, speaketh Fate,—
 “Death, in thy keeping must the man abide” ;
 Or, “He shall live for aye—his work is great.”

AN UNBIDDEN GUEST

I SAID, my dwelling-place is passing fair,
My dusk, dim chamber where the daylight dies :
No sun doth blind, no tears may vex mine eyes ;
Cast out alike are Glory and Despair.
My soul is banishèd—I wot not where.
I thrust him forth, unheedful of his cries,
Long years ago : full vain is thine emprise,
O shrouded Stranger from the outer air !

He smiles, a bitter merriment is his !
His footsteps falter not, but still draw nigh ;
He holds a crystal cresset-flame on high.
“ So, friend, at last we meet again—is *this*
The home forbidden me in years gone by ?
Behold, how desolate and bare it is ! ”

FULFILMENT

FULFILMENT mocks at Hope's foreshadowing,
On ruined fruits her sullen lips are fed ;
Athwart the last-limned dream, the song last said,
She sweeps the leaden shadow of her wing,
A bitter burden of bare blight to bring,
In sudden disenchantment, dull and dead.
And so we waken—in our seraph's stead
To find a gaping goblin-changeling.

Sweet Hope is slain, come let us bury her ;
The dream is done, the labour lost, we say ;
But oftentimes, gazing on the lifeless clay,
The old fire fills our veins, our longings stir ;
And still, to strive anew, we turn away
From yet another dead Hope's sepulchre.

COMPENSATION

IF Joy and Perfectness have crowned a day,
Alas! we say, 'This gracious day is done ;
The gods will never send us such an one
Again, however we may strive and pray.
But if in woe that knoweth no allay
Full slow the anguish-harrowed hours have run,
Our hearts grow lighter with the setting sun,
For then we feel that all hours pass away.

Now some are bound to Life with golden bands,
And Life to these is passing sweet and dear ;
They fain would linger in each lovely year
And shun the pilgrimage to unknown lands.
But souls that sorrow know not any fear
When Death draws nigh with healing in his hands.

TO-DAY

I.

CLASP close my hand ; this little space is ours,
This safe green shore between two bitter seas,
A narrow meadow-land of love and ease,
Made musical with birds and fair with flowers.
For all the fragrance of the rose-hung bowers,
For all the shelter of the dusky trees,
We thank thee, Fortune! Yea, upon our knees,
With tears we praise thee for these perfect hours.

Look not where Yesterday's dull current laves
The misty sea-board of our landing-place—
Clasp close my hand, and turn to me thy face,
Before we tempt To-morrow's tossing waves :
Forget, in this dear moment's certain grace,
That Time and Fate press on—and hold us slaves.

TO-NIGHT

II.

ALAS! my heart shrinks chill before 'To-night ;
The birds keep silence now ; the air is grey
And salt with leaping foam of Yesterday,
Lashed into fury with the shrill wind's flight.
To-day hath shrunk too narrow for delight :
To-morrow's billows raven for their prey ;
Through gathering dusk, low-gleaming on its way,
The rolling tide advances, wild and white.

Thy mournful face is fading from my sight,
Though still thy hand clings steadfastly in mine ;
The dawn draws near to bid us both resign
Our storm-worn shallop to the tide-wave's might :
Yet this, a little while, was mine and thine—
One green vine-garland plucked in Fate's despite.

LAST YEAR'S LEAVES

THE clear-eyed Spring flits by in fitful wise
With whistling winds, and sun-gifts scantily spread ;
Yet new growths venture in the dead blooms' stead,
And, sweetly shrill, brown bird to bird replies.
Still wearing something of last summer's guise,
Some few faint leaves the branches have not shed
Drop, dimly green, while others burn blood-red
Between the thin spring sunlight and mine eyes.

Old pains, old pleasures, these have had their day,
And strong new hopes and dreams are bourgeoning.
What though, a little space, the old thoughts cling ?
The young shoots blindly push their sturdy way
When green sap quickens in the veins of spring ;
But last year's leaves hang loose upon the spray.

AT EVENING

HOW will it fare with us when we are old ?
Shall we, through gathering greyness and dull rain,
Grieve that the red leaves fall and blossoms wane ?
Shall we, indeed, through mists of time behold
Our youth's lost picture limned on gleaming gold ?
Ah, no—well gone is all past joy and pain—
No more, for April hours and fancies fain,
Our souls shall crave dead dreams and tales untold.

If we could choose what boon the years might bring,
Should we not ask that age might proffer peace ?
No more the doubt and deep unrest of Spring ;
But woods unstirred by wind of wavering wing,
The quietude of grey untroubled seas,
And still green meadows hushed at evening.

MOONRISE

A DOWN the dim green glen beside the deep,
Along the hollow hill-slopes wet with dew,
Like phantoms flocking in the twilight blue,
Home from their pastures troop the drowsy sheep ;
Slow-dying sun-rays dream upon the steep,
And, heralded by bird-notes faint and few,
Peace, with night's dusky dawn, is born anew
While sea-winds sing of solitude and sleep.

The full moon rises round and rosy-red
Behind the grass-grown shoulder of the hill ;
Naught now remains to sigh for or fulfil—
The sunset fades, and life lies perfected
This little space, while, dreamy-slow and still,
Sweet Evening stoops to crown Day's weary head.

AN AUTUMN MORNING

A SUNNY autumn morning, calm and stilled,
Smiles on the bare, burnt meadows ; down the lane
The hedge-fruits ripen, fresh with last night's rain,
Among broad leaves the sun begins to gild ;
The crisp low-breathing air no frost has chilled,
Sweet with pine-fragrance, stings the sense again,
With joy so keen it meets the lips of pain
With dim desires and fancies unfulfilled.

Ah, swift and sudden as a swallow's flight
These flitting golden glimpses come and go ;
The Unseen clasps us through the veil, and, lo !
Our blood stirs strangely with a deep delight—
Old dreams, vague visions, glimmer on our sight,
All we have known, and all we may not know.

SOIR D'AUTOMNE

(AFTER CABANEL)

HERE, where the fading sunset bathes my face,
Hold thou my hand the while I lean on thee.
The dying leaves hang loose upon the tree ;
Soft broods the autumn evening's languid grace.
With slow step stealing from our resting-place,
Our Past, departing, waves his hand to me :
With dim, veiled brow he goes : reluctantly
He turns him from us at the low hill's base.

So sweet, so sad, so still, this silent hour ;
My heart throbs slow in solemn ecstasy :
The golden air is faint with memory,
And gracious weariness is evening's dower.
Fled is our summer ; but a little while
Is left us yet the mellow sunset smile.

BLIND MAN'S HOLIDAY

WHEN vanished is the gold and violet,
And all the pearl and opal turned to grey,
We call the drowsy children from their play.
“Come, bonny birds, to roost ; the sun has set !”
And still they cry, “We are not sleepy yet ;
Only a little longer may we stay—
Only a little while ?” half-sighing say ;
“We were so still, we hoped you might forget.”

We, too, delay, with childish stratagem,
The while we break our playthings one by one,
Sobbing our foolish hearts out over them ;
Till comes the wise nurse Death, at set of sun,
When, wearied out and piteous, we run
Weeping to her and clasp her garments' hem.

TIME

THEY err who picture Time outworn and old ;
A youth for ever blithe and fair he stands,
Wasting our days with swift destructive hands,
Freezing our lives with careless eyes and cold :
Lost is all wealth whereon he taketh hold,
And none gainsay or cancel his commands,
So stern his lips ! though wreathed with ruddy strands
Of rose and poppy gleam his locks of gold.

He flings the drooping garlands from his hair,
And others frail and fresh he gathereth ;
Smiling, he mocks our love and our despair ;
Heedless, he guides us to the Gates of Death,
And “Here the ways divide for aye,” he saith—
“Farewell,” he saith, and passeth unaware.

HEREAFTER

SHALL we not weary in the windless days
Hereafter, for the murmur of the sea,
The cool salt air across some grassy lea?
Shall we not go bewildered through a maze
Of stately streets with glittering gems ablaze,
Forlorn amid the pearl and ivory,
Straining our eyes beyond the bourne to see
Phantoms from out Life's dear, forsaken ways?

Give us again the crazy clay-built nest,
Summer, and soft unseasonable spring,
Our flowers to pluck, our broken songs to sing,
Our fairy gold of evening in the West;
Still to the land we love our longings cling,
The sweet, vain world of turmoil and unrest.

THE FAIRIES' VALEDICTION

HEAR them cry "Good-night! Good-bye!"
Piping voices sweet and shrill
Pierce the dusk from hill to hill.
"We are weary of you all,
High and humble, great and small.
Mortal anguish, mortal rage,
We will never more assuage;
Mortal pleasures, mortal pain,
Never will behold again.

"Once we loved your short-lived race,
Once we found you fair of face:
Smiled on golden lad and lass,
Brought their happiness to pass.
But your spring is all too brief,
Wrinkled as an autumn leaf;
Laidly as a goblin jest
Wax your loveliest and best—

Withered lips and faded eyes,
Lips unfit for lovers' sighs,
Eyes that may no more behold
Moonlight magic, elfin gold.

"Then, like drowsy moles, you creep
In the Earth-king's realm to sleep;
Leave the sun, that loved you well,
With the dark Dwarf-folk to dwell.
Those that hymned us worthily,
Even them we may not free!

“Hidden from your clouded eyes
Still we ride the dragon-flies ;
Tho’ we sing, no earthly ear
Now our twilight songs may hear ;
Tho’ we whirl the withered leaves,
Skim above the harvest sheaves,
Smooth greensward, or amber shore,
You shall see us never more—
Never more by sea or sky !
Good-night, Good-bye !”

BIRDS OF PASSAGE

(“A LOST CHANCE FLIES OWRE THE SEA”)

“TURN, turn again!” we call, and all in vain,
“Birds light of wing, that waver over-sea,
That lit erewhile, when blind, alas! were we;
Now we behold your breasts of bronze and gold,
Swift sapphire wings, and bills of ivory.”

They waver by, they gleam ’tween sea and sky;
Turn, bonny birds—oh! turn ye to the shore,
And glorify our hovels mean and poor;
Make sweet of cheer our wattled houses here,
Build ’neath the eaves, nor leave us evermore.

Afar they swing, on soft relentless wing;
They seek the Sunset Islands of the West,
The mellow low-lit meadows of the Blest,
Where poplars grey for ever sigh and sway,
And all desires and dreams are laid to rest.

ARSINOË'S CATS

Imitation of the manner of the later Greek poets, circ. A.D. 500. Cats were unknown in historic Greece till about the Christian era.

ARSINOË the fair, the amber-tressed,
Is mine no more ;
Cold as the unsunned snows are is her breast,
And closed her door.
No more her ivory feet and tresses braided
Make glad mine eyes ;
Snapt are my viol-strings, my flowers are faded—
My love-lamp dies.

Yet, once, for dewy myrtle-buns and roses,
All summer long,
We searched the twilight-haunted garden closes
With jest and song.
Ay, all is over now—my heart hath changèd
Its heaven for hell ;
And that ill chance which all our love estrangèd
In this wise fell :

A little lion, small and dainty sweet
(For such there be !),
With sea-grey eyes and softly-stepping feet,
She prayed of me.
For this, through lands Egyptian far away
She bade me pass ;
But in an evil hour, I said her nay—
And now, alas !
Far-travelled Nicias hath wooed and won
Arsinoë
With gifts of furry creatures white and dun
From over-sea,

A PORTRAIT

THERE, my ingle-nook above,
See the Lady of my Love,
Standing there
With her dainty, sandalled feet,
Limp, high-waisted gown, and sweet
Curling hair.

Deep her eyes, and pale her cheek,
(Oft I wonder—could she speak—
Were it best?)
Faintly smiling, still she stands,
Yellow roses in her hands—
On her breast.

And the glory of her prime
Neither tears nor tyrant time
May impair;
All the changing seasons through
I can still believe her true,
Think her fair.

Mute for her are praise and blame,
For my gracious Lady's name
No one knows;
Nor, for treasure-bags untold,
Would I hearken how the old
Story goes.

Though the fallen embers fill
Half the hearth with ashes chill,
Soft and grey,
Never lonely or forlorn
Will she leave me, nor in scorn
Turn away.

You will never leave my home,
You will never change, nor roam,
 O my Dear !
And your roses fill the room
With their freshness and perfume
 All the year.

Dame and flowers were dead, I know—
Just a century ago,
 To a day !
Yet, dear Lady, I maintain
In my love you live again,
 Mine for aye.

A SILHOUETTE

THERE hangs her graceful silhouette
 (A cameo, as it were, of jet),
Mine own familiar friend, and yet
 By chance I found her
Half hidden in a dusty tray,
'Mid tawdry trinkets of to-day,
While draggled stores of cast array
 Hung all around her.

Touched here and there with tarnished gold
Shines the small head, with tresses rolled
High in a knot of classic mould :
 Almost pathetic
The girlish profile seems to be—
Instinct with faith and purity
(Yet all surmise at most can be
 But theoretic).

I fain would think that, good and wise,
She viewed the world with steadfast eyes,
Stepping through life in modest guise,
 Beloved and cherished ;
But whether writ in gold or tears,
Or filled with homely hopes and fears,
Her story, with the withered years,
 Is past and perished.

Her eyes' soft colour no one knows,
Nor may this dusky slip disclose
If reigned the lily or the rose
 In her complexion ;
Yet sure unstinted praise should win
The parted lips, nor full, nor thin ;
The curved contours of throat and chin
 Are just—perfection.

I see her in the distance dim,
A white-gowned figure, straight and slim,
Fulfilling, free from doubt or whim,
Her simple duty :
Who watched her in the square oak pew ?
Who praised her cakes and elder-brew ?
Who sent her valentines—and who
Decried her beauty ?

Maybe in some old secrétaire
A faded ringlet of her hair,
Or sampler stitched with patient care
By her deft fingers,
Or faint pot-pourri in a bowl
Bedecked with gay festoon and scroll
(Fit relic of so sweet a soul !)
Forgotten lingers.

No longer jingles her spinet
To madrigal or minuet,
But, dumb with mildew and regret,
And all asthmatic,
Forgetful now of tune and tone,
With hoary cobwebs overgrown,
And (save for nesting mice) alone,
Stands in an attic.

The world is full of broken toys ;
Some baser leaven oft alloys
The fame that claims with certain voice
A sure remembrance ;
But she—we see her at her best,
A maiden wiser than the rest
In leaving, as her sole bequest,
So fair a semblance.

SPRING SONG

SO few and sweet,
The pale spring days draw near with timid feet—
Draw near and pass, alas! in swift retreat,
So few and sweet!

So few and sweet
Do dark wet violets our senses greet,
Where faint red sun-rays on the mosses meet,
So few and sweet!

So sweet and few
Those meadow-memories all dim with dew,
The veil withdrawn at dawn, with glimpses through
So sweet and few!

So sweet and few!
More sweet than all the roses June may strew;
Love, of Remembrance, weeping, born anew,
Bewails those hours the after-season slew,
So sweet and few!

SCYTHE SONG

(August 1887. *Longman's Magazine*.)

STALWART mowers, brown and lithe,

Over summer meads abloom,
Wielding fast the whispering Scythe,
Where is all the old perfume?

Breathes it yet in tender gloom,
Soft through Hades' twilight air?
Where hath Summer-tide her tomb?
Hush! the Scythe says, *where, ah where?*

Comes the long blade, gleaming cold,
Where the garden-ground is spread—
Rays of pearl on crowns of gold,
Dainty daisies, white and red!
Dames that o'er them once would tread,
Damsels blithe and debonair,
Where is all your sweetness fled?
Hush! the Scythe says, *where, ah where?*

Time! who tak'st and giv'st again
All things bitter, some things sweet,
Must we follow, all in vain
Follow still those phantom feet?
Is there not some grass-grown street,
Some old, yew-begirt parterre,
Where our Dreams and we may meet?
Hush! the Scythe says, *where, ah where?*

FLEUR-DE-LYS

BY the path, on either hand,
Rising from the garden-bed,
Stately lilies once would stand,
Once would tower above my head ;
Hardly reached 'twixt joy and dread,
Held by straining finger-tips,
These their shower of gold would shed
(Fairy gold !) upon my lips.

Gay is yet the garden-plot,
Rich in gold and ivory,
Lilies fresh and fine, but not—
Not the buds that used to be.
These are white and fair to see,
These to-day I bend above ;
Those were Queens that stooped to me
In their languor and their love.

PETITE CHANSON PICARDE

PALE leaves waver and whisper low
(Silvered leaves of the poplar tree),
Waters wander and willows blow
In Picardie.

Misty green of the orchard grass,
Grass-grown lanes by the sedge-fringed lea,
Pleasant ways for the feet that pass
Through Picardie.

Here the youth on a blue May night
Soft to his maiden's home steals he,
Binds a bough to the lintel's height
Of dark fir tree.

Gaston sigheth for Bernadette !
(Sorrow to come—or joy to be ?)
This she knows by the token set
In secrecy.

Long lagoons where the lilies lie
(Blossoms and buds of ivory),
Sweet the meadows and fair the sky
Of Picardie !

Where be the waters to drown regret ?
Where be the leaves of Sleep's own tree ?
Nowhere else in the world—nor yet
In Picardie.

LES BREBIS DU PÈRE JACQUES

ON a rainy autumn day
There is shelter under the eaves
For brown birds slim and gay,
And under the broad vine-leaves.

They cling on the old white wall,
And swing in the wet green vine,
Twittering, one and all,
Of play in the past sunshine.

The house is so still to-day—
Only the rustle and cheep
Of small brown birds at play :
For the owner lies asleep.

He saw through his window-pane,
As the autumn dawn uprose
Grey through the dripping rain,
Dim green of an orchard-close.

He said, " But the fold is far,
And the sun is hid to-day ;
And I know not where they are—
My sheep that have gone astray.

" Yet I hear their pattering feet,
And I feel the dust-cloud rise ;
They are following down the street,
And the dust-cloud dims mine eyes."

Still the warm rain pattered on
With its sound of flocks that sped,
That a misty sun-shaft shone
On an old man lying dead.

The little white house is still ;
But the rain sings soft and clear,
The small birds twitter shrill,
And the dead man smiles to hear.

BYGONES

THE moon swings low on the twilight,
 A glory of tawny gold,
And I would she might give me tidings
 Of my comrades known of old,
When, kissed by the sun and the sea-winds,
 Here a garden once would be,
A garden among the pine-trees,
 And a child that laughed with me.

Gone are the pines and their plumage,
 Gone is the gold-haired child,
And all that is left of the garden
 Is a red-rose tree run wild :
Winged like the wavering sea-birds,
 Flitting from shore to shore,
The pine-trees stray unresting ;
 The child is a child no more.

We know not either of other,
 Nor aught of the time between ;
But the wind blowing up from the sand-dunes
 Hath heard, and the moon hath seen :
They are mute, being loth to grieve us,
 Who watched when we both were gay ;
I who am I no longer,
 They that no more are they.

A PASTORAL

(IN MONOTONE)

TO B. L.

LONG misty lines sweep downward to the bay,
White sea-birds waver by, and dull sheep stray
Pale on the low, brown bosom of the hill ;
Wan twilight hangs her veil in skies of grey.

On the field's slope, laid light against the sky,
Thin, withered stems, their frail hands lifting high,
Implore to look upon dead Summer's face,
One tender moment, as they waste and die.

Small, creeping waves wash whispering on the sand,
Low writhen tamarisks, leaning from the strand,
With branches spread beneath the wild wind's will,
Sway, softly beckoning between sea and land.

The winter evening breathes completest rest :
(Intenser thrills of sunset leave the West
Disconsolate, and thronged with memories.)
When storm-winds sleep, low tones—grey skies—are best.

EVENING

TO A. G. L.

"The sound of a sea without wind is about them, and sunset is red."

THE wild gulls wheel and waver,
They call and cry,
In sad, shrill notes that quaver
'Tween earth and sky :
The red sun sinks apace,
While yet his gleaming face
Looks out a moment's space
Through mists that fly.

The toiling team move slowly
In rhythmic beat,
With patient heads bent lowly,
Their heavy feet
Past fresh-cut furrows clear ;
While low waves whisper near,
And sweet earth-odours here
The salt airs meet.

Dim wings of twilight hover
O'er field and sea,
For day is past and over ;
And silently,
With weary sense and sight,
Through veils of fading light,
The ploughman welcomes night
Where rest shall be.

A WAYSIDE CALVARY

THE carven Christ hangs gaunt and grim
Beneath his blue Picardian skies,
And piteous, perchance, to him
Seems every man that lives and dies.
Here, hid from hate of alien eyes,
Two hundred Prussians sleep, they say,
Beneath the cross whose shadow lies
Athwart the road to Catelet

'Mid foes they slumber unafraid,
Made whole by Death, the cunning leech,
Anear the long white roadway laid
By his cold arms, beyond all reach
Of *Heimweh* pangs or stranger's speech :
Of curse or blessing naught reck they,
Of snows that hide nor suns that bleach
The dusty road to Catelet.

Of garlands laid or blossoms spread
The Prussians' sun-scorched mound lies bare ;
But thin grass creeps above the dead,
And pallid poppies flutter fair,
And fling their drowsy treasures there
Beneath the symbol, stark and grey,
That hath the strangers in its care
Beside the road to Catelet.

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

UNDER the grass and the graveyard clay
Faint fall the voices from overhead.
Rough is the road for the quick to tread.
Breasting the tide and the tempest they—
Mine is the haven of life's heyday.
They are dying, but I am dead!

Oh, but the daisies and long grass under,
I, with my myriad lives instead,
Listening, laughing, I hear them wonder—
They are dying, but I am dead!

I, with my myriad lives again,
Grass and roses, and leaves and rain,
They with their struggle with doubt and pain,
They with the strangling throes to come,
They with the grip of the grave to dread.
God! how I laugh in my quiet home—
They are dying, but I am dead!

Oh! but the life of me! gathering, growing,
Emmet and butterfly, flower and thorn,
Poppy and rose in the gold sun glowing,
Over and over unmade, re-born.

One with the grey of the winter day,
One with the glint of the sunset gold,
One with the wind and the salt sea-spray,
One with the dun of the furrowed mould.

How shall I joy in the world unwitting ?

How shall I lean to the dear warm sun ?

Grub or nightingale—creeping or flitting—

Nature and I in the end made one.

Only the life of me one with thee :

Body and soul of us joined and wed.

Shall we not pity them, I and she,

They the dying and we the dead ?

ON THE ROAD

THE snow is white, the way is stern and sore,
Wide, blinding wastes behind us and before,
And though we soon shall see a stiller shore,
The road is long.

The gaunt grey wolves are famished for their prey,
But we are bound, and hungrier than they ;
The fruit will fall when we ourselves are clay—
The road is long.

We leave strong hands to cleanse away the stain,
Though we plod on along the shuddering plain
To marching music of the creaking chain—
The road is long.

The sands of Tyranny are slow to run.
Alas ! that this and many a morrow's sun
Must see the goal ungained, the work undone !
The road is long.

Our lives were ladder-rungs : the Cause moves on ;
The light shines fair as ever it has shone ;
'Twill blaze full bright ere many years be gone—
The road is long.

We are but bubbles breaking in the sea,
The strong slow tide that one day will be free ;
We shall not know it—yea, but it will be :
The road is long.

HYMN OF LABOUR

“**W**OE for the bale and the burden, the weary wasting of
days !

Woe for the toil and the tangle, the dim desolation of ways !

Lost, in mist of the Past, are the early faiths and fears ;

Dead, in the womb of the Future, the dream of the distant
years.

Shadows lengthen and shrink, and bleak day followeth day ;

Idle are all words spoken—What is there left to say ?”

This—it is well, indeed, that the old faiths slumber and
sleep ;

This—that the dream deemed dead may one day quicken
and leap :

Winter is well forgotten, but Spring and Summer for toil—

Go, turn thy feet to the fields for birth of the corn and oil !

Leave thy wreck of the Future—thy grave of a dead delight ;

Lift hard hands to the plough, and gird strong loins for the
fight.

Strive for the strife’s sake only, smite not foeman nor friend—

Strive for the strife’s sake only, set no shrine for an end ;

Set no goal for the winning, no bright bourne for the scope ;

Ask no guerdon of praise, and hope thou nothing from Hope.

If, afar in the sunrise, white wings flash and are fled,

Lift not thy hand from the toiling, turn not aside thine head.

Corn-husks gladden the swine, and ashes are left of fire,

Dead leaves shake on the trees—but what thing comes of
Desire ?

Dear is the Peace after Pain, and balm for the flint-worn
feet ;

Great peace cometh of Labour—out of the Strong the
Sweet.

So shalt thou come to thy reaping, so shalt thou say—it is
well—

With lips redeemed from the curse, and soul from the utter-
most hell.

So shalt thou look through the sunset, glad, and weary, and
free,

Saying, “A little space only—a little while—but I see.”

THE SMILE OF ALL-WISDOM

SEEKING the Smile of All-Wisdom one wandered afar
(He that first fashioned the Sphinx, in the dusk of the
past) :

Looked on the faces of sages, of heroes of war ;
Looked on the lips of the lords of the uttermost star,
Magi, and kings of the earth—nor had found it at last,

Save for the word of a slave, hoary-headed and weak,
Trembling, that clung to the hem of his garment, and
said,

“Master, the least of your servants has found what you seek :
(Pardon, O Master, if all without wisdom I speak !)

Sculpture the smile of your Sphinx from the lips of the Dead !”

Rising, he followed the slave to a hovel anear ;

Lifted the mat from the doorway and looked on the bed.

“Nay, thou hast spoken aright, thou hast nothing to fear :
That which I sought thou hast found, Friend ; for, lo, it is
here !—

Surely the Smile of the Sphinx is the Smile of the Dead !”

Aye, on the stone lips of old, on the clay of to-day,

Tranquil, inscrutable, sweet with a quiet disdain,

Lingers the Smile of All-Wisdom, still seeming to say,

“Fret not, O Friend, at the turmoil—it passeth away ;

Waste not the Now in the search of a Then that is vain :

“Hushed in the infinite dusk at the end shall ye be,

Feverish, questioning spirits that travail and yearn,

Quenched in the fulness of knowledge and peaceful as we :

Lo, we have lifted the veil—there was nothing to see !

Lo, we have looked on the scroll—there was nothing to
learn !”

“ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?”

STRAIGHT, slender limbs strained stark upon the cross,
 Dim anguished eyes that search the empty sky,—
 All human loneliness, and pain, and loss,
 Brake forth in thine exceeding bitter cry,
 Thou King of Martyrs, lifted up on high
 For men to mock at in thine agony :
 Would that that last, worst cup had passed thee by !
 Would that thy God had not forsaken Thee !

The cry of each man born that loves or prays—
 Yea, be his idol human or divine,
 Body or soul sinks dead in thorny ways
 Before the marsh-lit lantern of a shrine :
 I, Friend, have my God—ay, and thou hast thine ;
 Art, Fortune, Pleasure, Love ? or Christ, may be ?
 Shall the cry rise from thy lips first ? or mine ?
 “Why hast thou, O my God, forsaken me ?”

A weak soul wailing in the body's slough ;
 A strong man bent beneath a leaden Fate ;
 Dead hopes, crushed toys, and shattered gods !—O Thou
 Whom high desires and dreams left desolate,
 We cannot tread Thy narrow path and strait
 But all our pity and love go forth to Thee—
 Thine is the cry of each soul soon or late :
 “Why hast thou, O my God, forsaken me ?”

Grief is, and was, and evermore must be,
 Even as long waves, gathering again,
 Moan to and fro between the shore and sea ;
 And, as the wind wails blindly through the rain,
 So all earth-voices echo—aye in vain—
 The ceaseless questioning and piteous,
 The old appeal against eternal pain :
 “Why hast thou, O our God, forsaken us ?”

OLD BOOKS, FRESH FLOWERS

(TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF JOSEPH BOULMIER)

ALONE, at home, I dwell, content and free :
The soft May sun comes with his greeting fair ;
And, like a lute, my heart thrills tremblingly,
By the Spring's fingers touched to some sweet air.
Blessed be Thou, my God, who from my face
Tak'st the pale cast of thought that weary lowers !
My chamber walls—my narrow window-space
Hold all most dear to me—old books, fresh flowers.

Those trusty friends, that faithful company—
My books—say, "Long his slumbers, and we wait !"
But my flowers murmur as they look on me,
"Nay, never chide him, for he watched so late !"
Brethren and sisters, these of mine ! my room
Shines fair as with the light of Eden's bowers ;
The Louvre is not worth my walls abloom
With all most dear to me—old books, fresh flowers.

Beside your shelves I know not weariness,
My silent-speaking books ! so kind and wise ;
And fairer seems your yellowed parchment dress
Than gay morocco, to my loving eyes.
Dear blossoms, of the humble hermit's choice,
In sweetest communing what joys are ours !
To you I listen, and with you rejoice ;
For all I love is here—old books, fresh flowers.

Men are unlovely, but their works are fair—
Ay, men are evil, but their books are good :
The clay hath perished, and the soul laid bare
Shines from their books in heavenly solitude.

Light on each slender stem pure blossoms rest,
Like angel envoys of the Heavenly powers ;
Of all earth's maidens these are first and best,
And all I love is here—old books, fresh flowers.

A double harvest crowns my granary :
From all light loves and joys my soul takes flight ;
My books are blossoms, and their bee am I,
And God's own volumes are my blossoms bright.
These and no other bosom-friends are mine ;
With them I pass my best, my calmest hours ;
These only lead me to the light Divine,
And all I love is here : old books, fresh flowers.

My books are tombs where wit and wisdom sleep,
Stored full with treasure of the long ago ;
My tender buds, that dews of springtide steep,
Like shining mirrors of the future show.
The present is so sad ! . . . this dark to-day
Like skies with thunder charged above us lowers :
Ah ! of the past—the future—speak alway,
Tell me of naught but these . . . old books, fresh
flowers.

THE BROIDERED BODICE

(OLD FRENCH)

1600

“**D**EAR my love, I must ride away,
Fare ye well for a summer’s day ;
Loth am I to leave your side,
Yet your lover to Nantes must ride,
For the king commands and I obey.”

“ Now, in sooth, if to Nantes ye fare,
Thence, I pray you, a bodice bear—
Broidery-work on the breast and sleeves,
Of roses white with silvery leaves,
Silvery roses white and fair.”

Now to Nantes hath her gallant gone,
But never the bodice thought upon ;
Filled his thoughts with the wine and play,
Making merry the livelong day—
All the day till the torches shone.

“ But what shall I say to my ladye,
Who a broidered bodice prayed of me ? ”
“ Speak her soft and speak her smooth,
Say, ‘ Through Nantes I searched, in truth,
And none such bodices there might be.’ ”

“ Better a sea where no fish are,
Better the night without a star,
Hills with never a valley set,
Spring with never a violet,
Sweeter were all these things to me
Than a lying speech to my ladye.”

A BALLAD

(FROM THE ITALIAN)

MY steps have trod the fiery halls of Hell,
Yea, even mine, and are retraced again.
Mother of Grace ! how many there do dwell !
And there my love these many days hath lain.
She sprang to greet me swiftly, joyfully :
“ Dear heart,” she cried, “ dost thou remember not
Those days when ‘ Sweet my soul ’ thou calledst me ?
Still do I crave thy kisses unforget,
Still weep the summers dead when I was thine.
Let but thy lips assuage my lips that yearn !
So sweet thy mouth, of pity sweeten mine !
Lo, thou hast kissed me ! hope not to return.”

THE AUBADE

(OLD FRENCH FOLK-SONG)

IT is the lads of Longpré, so light of heart and gay,
And they are gone to Wanel, their sweet aubade to play :
And from his house the maréchal looks forth at break of day,
Says, "Tell me for what lady's sake your sweet aubade you
play ?

Come tell me, lads of Longpré, for whom you sing ?" saith
he.

"Now, peace be with you, maréchal, 'tis not for your ladye ;
'Tis all for your good neighbour's lass, who bideth you
anear."

(Now well the maid might hearken, so brave they spoke and
clear !)

And up she rose, the neighbour's lass, did on her linen gown,
She took the pitcher in her hand and to the stream went
down.

"Now who go ye so heavily, now why so pale art seen ?
Whence come ye, whither go ye, O maiden sad of mien ?"

"Nay, well may I go heavily, and well be sad of mien,
Since I, of all my lovers, have nought but woe and teen ;
For one is hanged, and one is burned, another waits the
death,

Another, at the king's fair court, the torture suffereth ;
Yes—one is hanged, and one is burned, the others fear the
fire,—

And one lives aye within my heart ; he is my heart's desire."

THE BOURNE

“**W**HAT goal remains for pilgrim feet,
Now all our gods are banished?”
Afar, where sea and sunrise meet,
Tall portals bathed in gold and red,
From either door a carven head
Smiles down on men full drowsily
’Mid mystic forms of wings outspread
Between the Gates of Ivorie.

Now if beyond lie town or street
I know not, nor hath any said,
Though tongues wag fast and winds are fleet :
Some say that there men meet the dead,
Or filmy phantoms in their stead,
And some, ‘It leads to Arcadie.’
In sooth, I know not, yet would tread
Between the Gates of Ivorie.

For surely there sounds music sweet,
With fair delights and perfumes shed,
And all things broken made complete,
And found again things forfeited ;
All this for him who scorning dread
Shall read the wreathen fantasie,
And pass, where no base soul hath sped,
Between the Gates of Ivorie.

Ah, Princess ! grasp the golden thread,
Rise up and follow fearlessly,
By high desire and longing led
Between the Gates of Ivorie.

DEAD POETS

WHERE be they that once would sing,
Poets passed from wood and dale?

Faintly, now, we touch the string,
Faithless, now, we seek the Grail :
Shakspeare, Spenser, nought avail,
Herrick, England's Oberon,
Sidney, smitten through his mail,
Souls of Poets dead and gone !

Ronsard's Roses blossoming
Long are faded, long are frail ;
Gathered to the heart of Spring
He that sang the breezy flail.¹
Ah ! could prayer at all prevail,
These should shine where once they shone,
These should 'scape the shadowy pale—
Souls of Poets dead and gone !

What clear air knows Dante's wing ?
What new seas doth Homer sail ?
By what waters wandering
Tells Theocritus his tale ?
Still, when cries the Nightingale,
Singing, sobbing, on and on,
Her brown feathers seem to veil
Souls of Poets dead and gone !

Charon, when my ghost doth hail
O'er Cocytus' waters wan,
Land me where no storms assail
Souls of Poets dead and gone.

¹ Joachim du Bellay.

THE MARSH OF ACHERON

BETWEEN the Midnight and the Morn,
The under-world my soul espied ;
I saw the shades of men outworn,
The Heroes fallen in their pride ;
I saw the marsh-lands drear and wide,
And many a ghost that strayed thereon ;
"Still must I roam," a maiden sighed,
"The sunless marsh of Acheron."

"And is thy fate thus hope-forlorn ?"
"Yea, even so," the shade replied,
"For one I wronged in life hath sworn
In hatred ever to abide :
The lover seeketh not the bride,
But aye, with me, his heart dreams on,
Asleep in these cold mists that hide
The sunless marsh of Acheron."

"And still for me will Lacon mourn,
And still my pardon be denied :
Ah, never shall I cross the bourne
That Dead from Living doth divide.
Yet I repent me not !" she cried,
"Nay—only that my hour is gone ;
One memory hath glorified
The sunless marsh of Acheron."

Ah, Princess ! when *thy* ghost shall glide
Where never star nor sunlight shone,
See thou she tarry not beside
The sunless marsh of Acheron.

ASPHODEL

Κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα

NOW who will thread the winding way,
Afar from fervid summer heat,
Beyond the sun shafts of the day,
Beyond the blast of winter sleet?
In the green twilight, dimly sweet,
Of poplar shades the shadows dwell,
Who found erewhile a fair retreat
Along the mead of Asphodel.

There death and birth are one, they say;
Those lowlands bear no yellow wheat,
No sound doth rise of mortal fray,
Of lowing herds, of flocks that bleat,
Nor wind nor rain doth blow and beat;
Nor shrieketh sword, nor tolleth bell;
But lovers one another greet
Along the mead of Asphodel.

I would that there my soul might stray;
I would my phantom, fair and fleet,
Might cleave the burden of the clay,
Might leave the murmur of the street,
Nor with half-hearted prayer entreat
The half-believed-in Gods; too well
I know the name I shall repeat
Along the mead of Asphodel.

Queen Proserpine, at whose white feet
In life my love I may not tell,
Wilt give me welcome when we meet
Along the mead of Asphodel?

FAIRY GOLD

A GOBLIN, trapped in netted skein,
Did bruise his wings with vain essay ;
“Now who will rend this hempen chain ?

Let that man ask me what he may,
I shall not, surely, say him nay :
The shadows wane, the day grows old ;
Meseems this mesh will keep for aye
The sun-bright glint of Fairy Gold !”

These echoes of the creature's pain,
As in the fowler's net he lay,
Drew soon anigh a surly swain,
Who cut the cords and freed the fay :
“Now what fair gift shall well repay
Thy service done ?—for words are cold—
Sweet looks or wisdom ? vine or bay ?”
“The sun-bright glint of Fairy Gold.”

“Thou chooseth ill, but speech is vain ;
Lo ! here is treasure good and gay :”
The goatherd grasped his golden gain
And bore the shining store away ;
He oped his chest, at break of day,
To find—no talents, bright and cold,
But soft, dead cowslips—nowhere lay
The sun-bright glint of Fairy Gold !

Take hands, O Prince, for we will stray,
We twain, where nought is bought or sold,
And find in every woodland way
The sun-bright glint of Fairy Gold.

THE FLIGHT OF NICOLETE

ALL bathed in pearl and amber light
She rose to fling the lattice wide,
And leaned into the fragrant night,
Where brown birds sang of summertime
('Twas Love's own voice that called and cried).
"Ah, Sweet!" she said, "I'll seek thee yet,
Though thorniest pathways should betide
The fair white feet of Nicolette."

They slept, who would have stayed her flight
(Full fain were they the maid had died!)
She dropped adown her prison's height
On strands of linen featly tied.
And so she passed the garden-side,
With loose-leaved roses sweetly set,
And dainty daisies, dark beside
The fair white feet of Nicolette!

Her lover lay in evil plight
(So many lovers yet abide!)
I would my tongue could praise aright
Her name, that should be glorified.
Those lovers now, whom foes divide,
A little weep,—and soon forget.
How far from these faint lovers glide
The fair white feet of Nicolette.

My Princess, doff thy frozen pride,
Nor scorn to pay Love's golden debt;
Through his dim woodland take for guide
The fair white feet of Nicolette,

MIGHT BE

YOUNG Love flies fast, on wavering wing,
Full fast he flies for woe or weal,
And some do bear his grievous sting
Too deep for any leech to heal ;
I scorn to swell their sad appeal,
False phantom, fled from our embrace !
And yet—I doubt me I might kneel
Should you but chance to turn your face.

Of days long done our praises ring
Right loud and full, a valorous peal,
For life was then a lusty thing :
Ah ! then were mighty blows to deal.
Brave days, my masters !—still, I feel
In sooth I could not deem him base
Who'd shun your store, O age of steel !
Should you but chance to turn your face.

“Alas !” our dainty minstrels sing,
“That sorrow sets unbroken seal
On saint and sinner, clown and king.”
They beg death's boon with busy zeal.
They'll do you homage warm and leal,
Death ! while you pass their dwelling-place,
But lips would gape and senses reel
Should you but chance to turn your face.

Queen Fortune of the mystic wheel,
We bow to find you full of grace,
We would not turn on sullen heel
Should *you* but chance to turn your face.

THE OPTIMIST

HEED not the folk who sing or say
In sonnet sad or sermon chill,
“Alas! alack! and well-a-day!
This round world’s but a bitter pill!”
Poor porcupines of fretful quill!
Sometimes we quarrel with our lot:
We, too, are sad and careful—still,
We’d rather be alive than not.

What though we wish the cats at play
Would some one else’s garden till;
Though Sophonisba drop the tray
And all our worshipped Worcester spill,
Though neighbours ‘practise’ loud and shrill,
Though May be cold and June be hot,
Though April freeze and August grill,—
We’d rather be alive than not.

And, sometimes, on a summer’s day
To self and every mortal ill
We give the slip, we steal away,
To lie beside some sedgy rill;
The darkening years, the cares that kill,
A little while are well forgot;
Deep in the broom upon the hill
We’d rather be alive than not.

Pistol, with oaths didst thou fulfil
The task thy braggart tongue begot.
We eat our leek with better will,
We’d rather be alive than not.

BETTY BARNES, THE BOOK-BURNER

WHERE is that baleful maid
Who Shakspeare's quartos shred ?
Whose slow diurnal raid
The flames with *Stephen* fed ?
Where is *Duke Humphrey* sped ?
Where is the *Henries'* book ?
They all are vanishèd
With Betty Barnes the Cook.

And now her ghost, dismayed,
In woeful ways doth tread—
(Though once the grieving shade
Sir Walter visited)—
Where culprits sore bestead,
In dank or fiery nook,
Repent their deeds of dread
With Betty Barnes the Cook.

There Bagford's evil trade
Is duly punishèd ;
There fierce the flames have played
Round Caliph Omar's head ;
The biblioclastic dead
Have diverse pains to brook,
'Mid rats and rainpools led
With Betty Barnes the Cook.

Caxton ! Be comforted,
For those who wronged thee—look ;
They break affliction's bread
With Betty Barnes the Cook.

MY ASTER PLATE¹

MY Aster plate hangs safe upon the wall
In rounded perfectness, not large, nor small,
No more 'mid yon swart Hebrew's wares to be ;
I saw, I bought, I bore it joyfully
In hidden triumph from the huckster's stall.

The sun may hide his rolling golden ball,
The moon may sulk behind her purple pall,
But thou art sun and moon and stars to me,
My Aster plate !

Have mercy, Fortune, on thy trembling thrall !
And spare this dark blue disc, his all-in-all ;
Wife, children, friends, I'll freely yield to thee,
My books, my buhl, my much-loved marquetricie ;
Take these—but let no evil chance befall
My Aster plate.

¹ Reprinted from the *Art Journal*, by permission of Messrs. Virtue & Co.

TO HESPERUS

(AFTER BION)

O JEWEL of the deep blue night,
Too soon, to-day, the moon arose ;
I pray thee, lend thy lovely light.

Than any other star more bright
An hundredfold thy beauty glows,
O jewel of the deep blue night.

Too soon Selene gained the height,
And now no more her glory shows ;
I pray thee, lend *thy* lovely light.

Anon our revel of delight
Towards the shepherd's dwelling goes,
O jewel of the deep blue night !

And I must lead the dance aright,
Yea—even I—for me they chose :
I pray thee, lend thy lovely light.

No thief am I, nor evil wight,
Nor numbered with the traveller's foes,
O jewel of the deep blue night !

None would I spoil, nor e'en affright ;
Mine are the Lover's joys and woes :
I pray thee, lend thy lovely light.

For good it is, in all men's sight
(Thou knowest well), to favour those,
O jewel of the deep blue night !

Thy golden lamp hath turned to white
The silver of the olive-close ;
O jewel of the deep blue night !
I pray thee, lend thy lovely light.

LOVE, THE GUEST

I DID not dream that Love would stay,
I deemed him but a passing guest,
Yet here he lingers many a day.

I said, "Young Love will flee with May
And leave forlorn the hearth he blest,"
I did not dream that Love would stay.

My envious neighbour mocks me, "Nay,
Love lies not long in any nest."
Yet here he lingers many a day.

And though I did his will alway,
And gave him even of my best,
I did not dream that Love would stay.

I have no skill to bid him stay,
Of tripping tongue or cunning jest,
Yet here he lingers many a day.

Beneath his ivory feet I lay
Pale plumage of the ringdove's breast,
I did not dream that Love would stay.

Will Love be flown? I oftentimes say,
Home turning for the noonday rest,
Yet here he lingers many a day.

His gold curls gleam, his lips are gay,
His eyes through tears smile loveliest;
I did not dream that Love would stay.

He sometimes sighs, when far away
The low red sun makes fair the west,
Yet here he lingers many a day.

Thrice blest of all men am I ! yea,
Although of all unworthiest ;
I did not dream that Love would stay,
Yet here he lingers many a day.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET

O MASTER of the Old and New!
We speak thy name with bated breath;
Thy waking years were all too few.

With airs that erst in Athens blew
Thy toils full harvest murmureth,
O Master of the Old and New !

In misty pastures, dim with dew,
Thy sad, strong spirit slumbereth ;
Thy waking years were all too few.

The forms thy potent pencil drew
On sunset light move strong as Death,
O Master of the Old and New !

The sowing seasons turn anew,
And toiling man continueth ;
Thy waking years were all too few.

Dark Orcus veils thee from our view
On vast, low meadow-lands of Death,
O Master of the Old and New.

Now men their tardy laurels strew,
And Fame, remorseful, sobbing saith,
"O Master of the Old and New,
Thy waking years were all too few !"

OF HIMSELF

A POOR cicala, piping shrill,
I may not ape the Nightingale ;
I sit upon the sun-browned hill,
A poor cicala, piping shrill,
When summer noon is warm and still,
Content to chirp my homely tale ;
A poor cicala, piping shrill,
I may not ape the Nightingale.

BLIND LOVE

LOVE hath wept till he is blind,
Lovers, guide him on his way ;
Though he be of fickle mind,
Love hath wept till he is blind.
Once ye knew him fair and kind ;
Now, alas and well-a-day !
Love hath wept till he is blind—
Lovers, guide him on his way !

LES ROSES MORTES

THE roses are dead,
 And swallows are flying :
White, golden, and red,
The roses are dead ;
Yet tenderly tread
 Where their petals are lying :
The roses are dead,
 And swallows are flying.

THE STORY OF MARPESSA

(AS HEARD IN HADES)

ALONE I strayed along the dusky mead
Musing on divers things beyond recall,
On love and constancy ; and if indeed
This were reward of that, or if at all
To seize and hold Love's rolling golden ball
Were possible to folk of mortal clay—
And, as I raised mine eyes, I saw a tall
Fair woman move to meet me on the way.

And straight I knew Marpessa by her bright
Long tresses, and her shining feet, that fell
Noiseless, as onward through the dim grey light
That broods above the mead of asphodel
She came to greet me, saying, "Is it well
With thee, good poet, and with those who yet
Are left on earth a little while to dwell
And see those happy skies I half forget ?

"But come, now, tell me of that world above,
Of all the women say, and men-folk do,
And, if it may be, of thy life and love :—
Of women's fragrant raiment tell me too

If wrought the same, or fashioned aught anew,
And in high places say what men do reign?—
What sickness slew thee, or what mortal threw
The spear that joined thee to King Orcus' train? "

And now indeed I could not choose but smile
That women aye their womanhood will show!
By fair Marpessa's side I strayed awhile
Telling her all her soul desired to know,
Of this man's triumphing and that man's woe—
And then, bethinking me at last, I said,
"Tell me, Marpessa, of thy long ago,
For from my memory 'tis past and sped."

"A foolish tale like mine is soon forgot,
Soon told, and soon forgot," the shade replied.
"In pleasant places fell my childhood's lot,
For still my loving father's chiefest pride
Was I. But time drew on and lovers tried
To win me, and my sire Euenos cried
That no man born should win me for his wife,
But by his footstool ever must I bide.

"Bold Ides, son of King Alphareus,
Of all my suitors seemed the goodliest,
For he was comely as the sons of Zeus,
And no man living might with him contest
The crowns of parsley and wild olive; best
Was he of all the youths with bow or sword;
And oft my maidens murmured low that blest
Would be that woman who should call him lord.

"Most lordly bride gifts offered he in vain:
Ten well-wrought tripods all untouched of fire,
Twelve gleaming caldrons free from rust or stain,
And milk-white kine that lowed within his byre

(A herd that Helios' self might well desire)—
All these, with goodly store of bronze and gold,
Still fruitlessly he proffered to my sire,
Who said, 'My lamb remains within my fold.'

"And mine old nurse would say, 'Nay, never weep,
Unthinking Haste the seed of Sorrow sows
Full oft, for grey Experience to reap ;
'Though now to thee a smiling face he shows,
Fair Hymen holdeth hid a world of woes ;
He waits to lure thy feet through thorny ways,
(For men are aye a fickle folk, God knows !)
So live a maid unwedded all thy days.'

"One morn to hear a beggar's plaint I rose,
And singing ran adown the shining stair
And through the court into the orchard-close
Abloom ; no suppliant I ween was there,
But Ides clasped my knees with many a prayer,
Yet never tarried for my yea or nay—
In his strong arms he lifted me and bare
Swift to his chariot, and so sped away.

"And, as his milk-white horses onward flew,
Like driven doves, athwart the broad green plain,
Within his hand most gently mine he drew,
Saying, 'Forgive my rude device to gain
What most I coveted ! for all in vain
I sought thee fairly at Euenos' hands :
Not long, love, shall endure thy father's pain
When, wedded, we return from mine own lands.'

"But, even as he spake, it seemed a star
Shot earthward 'twixt our horses, fair and fleet,
That cowering shrank beneath the polished car,
Nor lash nor word might urge them nor entreat :

Then on mine eyes a flaming fire there beat,
And all around me floated, fold on fold,
Close-binding every limb from face to feet,
A cloud—a wondrous mesh of misty gold.

“And then a little way along the air,
Borne by the softest wind that woos the Spring,
I floated onward in the Sun-god’s snare
Unto a mead with tall trees flowering,
Where many-tinted birds on noiseless wing
Below the blossom-burdened branches flew,
And where did hang great golden fruits aswing,
While wood-nymphs’ faces peered the leafage through.

“There I abode in sorrow many days,
Sore-fretting, even as a caged bird frets
Behind the golden bars, nor cares to raise
His voice in tuneful song, nor e’er forgets
His dewy home, but, dumb with vain regrets,
Sits still with ruffled plumes and clouded eye,
And museth sadly on the fowler’s nets :
So sad in that green pleasaunce did I lie !

“(Now this I wist not, but thereafter knew
That Ides to my parents’ house had sped
To tell them all the luckless story through,
And bid them fear not, but be comforted :
For ‘Far or near, by sea or sky,’ he said,
‘My wit shall find her, and my strength retrieve.
Lament not for Marpessa as one dead—
A thing most profitless it is to grieve.’)

“Now ever and anon an amber flame,
Bright as the sun and soft as ring-dove’s eyes,
Lit all the meadow when Apollo came,
And sweeter, softer than the south wind sighs,

His pleading voice would say, 'Dear maid, arise
And shake this sullen sorrow from thy heart,
Refrain thy constant weeping, and be wise !'
But still I hid my face and held apart.

"And, one day, as I watched the misty morn
Steal rosy-fingered through the laurel trees,
I saw, a little way beyond the bourne
Of my fair prison, on the lower leas,
A man who strode like one who hastes to seize
Some bright lost treasure, and my heart beat loud ;
But suddenly uprising to his knees,
Staying his footsteps, clung a shining cloud.

"Then Ides cried aloud upon my name
And said, 'Thy father's halls forlorn of thee
Are desolate indeed, and fragrant flame
Of fair burnt-offering riseth constantly ;
And, like the plaintive halcyon of the sea,
Unceasing still thy lady-mother grieves,
Nor more takes thought for wise housewifery,
Nor with her maids the purple web she weaves.

"And all the land goes mourning for thy sake,
For fruitlessly they seek thee far and wide ;
And thou, Apollo ! who dost think to take
Afar for ever from her parents' side
And my strong arms this maid, my plighted bride,
Though swift thy silver arrows cleave the sky
To loose men's knees and soul from breath divide,
I fear thee not, but all thy might defy !'

"So spake he, leaning on his crooked bow,
And as a tawny lion ere he spring
Scans the rash slayer of his mate, even so
Glared mighty Ides on the fair-tressed king,

Who said (and laughing touched one silver string
Of his bright lyre), 'No sorry thief am I—
A weeping woman is a woeful thing,
Nor ever joy hath anyone thereby—

" 'So, maiden, if indeed thy heart incline
To this mad youth, whose reckless speech doth press
On danger's heels, or if thou wilt be mine
And dwell in more than mortal happiness
And joy beyond the skill of man to guess,
Thine either choice I bid thee now declare !'
He leaned towards me in his loveliness
And from his forehead fell his yellow hair.

"Then all my soul within my breast was stirred ;
Meseemed the longing for my parents slept,
And I forgot great Ides' spoken word,
And all the tears my captive eyes had wept ;
So like some fawn a snake doth charm I stept
Towards Apollo's arms a little space,
While strange bewilderment my senses kept,
Nor aught beheld I but his wondrous face.

"And then—I know not why—the magic broke :
'Twixt my slow footsteps and his presence fair,
Thin voices, shrill and sorrow-stricken, spoke
That seemed the sound of some out-worn Despair :
Pale phantoms flitted through the golden air
(As withered rose-leaves drift upon the wind),
And low the ghostly voices wailed, 'Forbear !
Or fade, like us, forgotten out of mind.'

"Now, as they flitted by, their forms I knew,
And all their loveliness, and all their woe :
Leucothoë, with Clytie, stern and true,
By love and vengeance made her sister's foe ;

Fair Daphne with Bolina followed slow.
But all too many are those names to tell ;
And each one's speech, in passing, murmured low,
Was, ' Once—ah, once—Apollo loved me well.'

" And from my soul uncoiled the fatal spell ;
I turned, and looked on Ides where he stood
Awaiting joy—or grief unspeakable :
And earthly life once more seemed sweet and good
With all the cares of wife and motherhood :
' The gods love lightly, nor for long—may be
That men are sometimes of a constant mood—
Take me, oh Ides, and be true to me !'

' Then, through the net-like haze of golden light,
Even as a snared heron, freed at last,
Doth seek her own grey marsh-lands with delight,
Nor fears the chilly skies nor winter blast,
So, gladly, from the Sun-god's thrall I passed,
Mine eyes with too much radiance dazed and dim ;
But goodly Ides seized and held me fast,
And all my heart's hid love went out to him.

" Right gladly then he bore me to my home,
And gladly to my mother's arms I sped,
Who deemed me drowned, perchance, in the sea foam,
Or with dread Scylla's victims numbered—
Thereafter soon my love and I were wed."

" And was thy mortal lover true to thee ?"
I asked—but silently the phantom fled,
Nor any answer more vouchsafed to me.

A SUMMER NIGHT

A SUMMER NIGHT

*“Le vent qui vient à travers la montagne
Me rendra fou.”*

THE linden leaves are wet,
The gas-lights flare—
Deep yellow jewels set
In dusky air,
In dim air subtly sweet,
With vanished rain.

Hush!—from the distant street
Again—again—
Life’s music swells and falls,
Despairing—light—
Beyond my garden walls
This summer night.

Where do you call me, where?
O voice that cries!
O murky evening air,
What Paradise,
Unsought, unfound, unknown,
Inviteth me,
With faint night-odours blown?
With murmurous plea?

Future art thou, or Past ?
Hope, or Regret ?
My heart throbs thick and fast,
Mine eyes are wet,
For well and well I know
Thou hast no share,
Nor hence, not long ago,
Nor anywhere.

IN A LONDON GARDEN

O HANGING linden leaves the lamp shines through,
Loose-dropping discs of limpid yellow lustre,
Like magic fruits upon the dusky blue ;
Voiceless and viewless as the falling dew,
Unshapen dreams amid your shadows cluster.

O dreaming air ! your dream must needs be sweet,
The secret thought you fain would tell but dare not.
One with the message of the passing feet,
The roll of wheels, the murmur of the street,
Be it false or true, be it life or death, I care not.

O luminous dusk ! Heart of the summer night !
Hold fast your secret, breathe the watchword never.
Keep it inviolate, veiled from sense and sight ;
Safe from disclosure's disenchanting blight,
Dear and desired, unknown, beloved for ever.

CHIMÆRA

THE yellow light of an opal
On the white-walled houses dies,
The roadway beyond my garden
It glimmers with golden eyes.

Alone in the faint spring twilight,
The crepuscle vague and blue,
Every beat of my pulses
Is quickened by dreams of you.

You whom I know and know not,
You come as you came before,
Here, in the misty quiet,
I greet you again once more.

Welcome, O best belovèd—
Life of my life—for lo !
All that I ask you promise,
All that I seek you know.

The dim grass stirs with your footstep,
The blue dusk throbs with your smile ;
I and the world of glory
Are one for a little while.

.

The spring sun shows me your shadow,
The spring wind bears me your breath,
You are mine for a passing moment,
But I am yours to the death.

WORSHIP

IN the tremulous thin sunlight,
With the high red wall between them,
Lie my garden green and quiet,
And the Chapel of Our Lady.

Comes the sound of many voices
With the organ rising, falling ;—
Waves of sound and waves of sunlight
Launch me on a sea of wonder ;
And the mystery of worship,
All its glamour, all its sweetness,
Strong as death and deep as longing,
Sweet with more than human passion,
Deep with more than human yearning,
Leads me to the land I know not.
Ah, the land, the land we know not,
Ah, the heart's desire that claims us ;
Where art thou, belovèd country ?
Thou the dear, the long-desirèd ;—
We that seek not, shall we find thee ?

Yet a little while we win thee
In the vague unearthly passion,
In the mystery of Worship.

OF THE EARTH, EARTHY

NEVER for us those dreams aforetime shown
Of white-winged angels on a shining stair,
Or seas of sapphire round a jasper throne :
Give us the spangled dusk, the turbid street ;
The dun, dim pavement trod by myriad feet,
Stained with the yellow lamplight here and there ;
The chill blue skies beyond the spires of stone :

The world's invincible youth is all our own,
Here where we feel life's pulses burn and beat.

Here is the pride of Life, be it foul or fair,
This clash and swirl of streets in the twilight air ;
Beauty and Grime, indifferent, side by side ;
Surfeit and Thirst, Endeavour and Despair,
Content and Squalor, Lassitude and Care,
All in the golden lamplight glorified :
All quick, all real, hurrying near and wide.

Life and Life's worst and best be ours to share,
Charm of the motley ! undefined and rare ;
Melodious discord in the heart o' the tune,
Sweet with the hoarse note jarring everywhere !

Let us but live, and every field shall bear
Fruit for our joy ; for Life is Life's best boon.

IN THE RAIN

RAIN in the glimmering street—
Murmurous, rhythmical beat ;
Shadows that flicker and fly ;
Blue of wet road, of wet sky,
(Grey in the depths and the heights) ;
Orange of numberless lights,
Shapes fleeting on, going by.

Figures, fantastical, grim—
Figures, prosaical, tame,
Each with chameleon-stain,
Dun in the crepuscle dim,
Red in the nimbus of flame—
Glance through the veil of the rain.

Rain in the measureless street—
Vistas of orange and blue ;
Music of echoing feet,
Pausing, and pacing anew.

Rain, and the clamour of wheels,
Splendour, and shadow, and sound ;
Coloured confusion that reels
Lost in the twilight around.

.

When I lie hid from the light,
Stark, with the turf overhead,
Still, on a rainy Spring night,
I shall come back from the dead.

Turn then and look for me here
Stealing the shadows along ;
Look for me—I shall be near,
Deep in the heart of the throng :

Here, where the current runs rife,
Careless, and doleful, and gay,
Moving, and motley, and strong,
Good in its sport, in its strife.

.

Ah, might I be—might I stay—
Only for ever and aye,
Living and looking on life !

TRANSFORMATION

A FAR from country lanes and leas,
O'er pavements foul with stain and spot,
I hastened, holding—half forgot—
In careless hands, a clustered knot
Of rosy, frail anemones.

The sun shone round them, gold and rose,
And sudden wonder dawned on me,
For that mean by-way seemed to be
More fair than isles of Arcady,
Or splendours of eternal snows.

Transfigured stretched the squalid street,
With all its tawdry shops arow :
I felt the cowslips round me blow,
The cold spring twilights clear and slow,
The dews of dawn about my feet.

O wonder-wealth without alloy,
Breath from the far-off fields divine !
The spring sun sheds his amber wine,
And makes the viewless glories mine,
The earth's illimitable joy.

AUBADE

THE lights are out in the street, and a cool wind swings
Loose poplar plumes on the sky ;
Deep in the gloom of the garden the first bird sings :
Curt, hurried steps go by
Loud in the hush of the dawn past the linden screen,
Lost in a jar and a rattle of wheels unseen
Beyond on the wide highway :—
Night lingers dusky and dim in the pear-tree boughs,
Hangs in the hollows of leaves, though the thrushes rouse,
And the glimmering lawn grows grey.
Yours, my heart knoweth, yours only, the jewelled gloom,
Splendours of opal and amber, the scent, the bloom,
Yours all, and your own demesne—
Scent of the dark, of the dawning, of leaves and dew ;
Nothing that was but hath changed—'tis a world made new—
A lost world risen again.

The lamps are out in the street, and the air grows bright—
Come—lest the miracle fade in the broad, bare light,
The new world wither away :
Clear is your voice in my heart, and you call me—whence ?
Come—for I listen, I wait,—bid me rise, go hence,
Or ever the dawn turn day.

RESURGAM

THOUGH I am old, the world will still be young—
The spring wind breathes on slumbering memories,
The spring birds pipe amid my garden trees,
And dense and green the new year's grass hath sprung :
Ay, though my light is dimmed and my heart wrung
By pitiless eld's unsparing cruelties.

Ah, for that shore beyond the unsailed seas !
Where burns the Fire of Life with equal flame :
Where never sigheth song nor bringeth breeze
One whisper of the pride of youth's surcease,
The faded years' inevitable shame.
And yet—and yet—most sweet it is to know
That though my meagre days be withering,
Still shall be wrought the miracle of Spring,
That deep May nights shall bloom, and love-lamps glow,
Still shall the town's bright rapids swirl and flow,
The meteor troop of passions come and go ;
That men shall love, and hate, and laugh, and sing.

I see my imperfection perfected,
My hampered hopes by stronger hearts set free,
My halting plans by others crowned and sped,
Whose feet shall find the paths I might not tread,
Whose clearer eyes the things I loved shall see :—
The sunlight gold—the shadow of the dawn—
The autumn evening's amber sorcery,
When o'er my head the veil of death is drawn
And all the waves of Night go over me.
And so I cannot but be comforted

To think how fair my world will always be,
That Youth and Spring revive eternally,
That abler hands shall labour in my stead,
And gay new ventures dare the hazardous sea :

Thus shall I live again though I be dead ;
And all my soul is glad unspeakably.

THE HOUSE OF DREAM

STILL stands the mansion, glorious as of old,
My earliest citadel,
My strong, impregnable hold,
Where veriest dross was turned to purest gold,
Where my best hours befell.

These winter days are colourless and cold,
Yet I remember well
The painted books, the pictures on the walls,
The shadowy maze of corridors and halls ;
The sweet secluded cell
Where through the casement crept the clustering vine,
And late, red sun-rays warmed my heart like wine
With joy unspeakable !

But I am banished from that dear demesne,
The tale is told, the spring-tide songs are sung :
Strange faces mock me, beautiful and young,
From the clear window-pane
Lit like a topaz ; and I hear within
Clamour of shrill young voices, and the din
Of dancing feet upon the chamber floor,
While I, without, in the November rain,
Turn from the open door ;
Raising the siege, ah, desperate quest and vain !
Of my old home that knows me now no more.

Void is the vow, and naught the magic name,
Once would you give what now I could not claim,
Once were you dear and I the honoured guest—
The old order changeth at grey Time's behest—
His be the blame !

O House beloved—unchanged !
Eld hath divided us and years estranged,
You stand immortal still—
Youth presses gaily through your open door,
But I—no more.

REVEILLE

I

BETWEEN the dark and light,
Between the day and night,
'Twixt dreams and wakening,
Clear through the dawning grey,
Faintly, as far away,
I heard the first bird sing,

Like a cool fountain's call
Singing in cadenced fall,
Limpid as summer rain,
Leading the wand'rer, deep
In quiet groves of Sleep,
Back to the world again.

II

When I am dead and gone,
Over my breast a stone,
Dust on my tired head ;
Should you but speak my name,
One withered hour reclaim—
Surely your voice would stir
Grief—or the ghost of her—
There in my darkened bed.

Should you but cry to me
As some stray memory
Fans you with fleeting wing ;

I shall remember then
Life and the world of men,
Straight must I wake, alas !
Under the creeping grass,
Hearing—remembering.

SPRING SONG

SO many ways to wander in,
So many lands to see !
The west wind blows through the orchard-close,
And the white clouds wander free ;
The wild birds sing in the heart of Spring,
And the green boughs beckon me.

And it's O, for the wide world, far away !
'Tis there I fain would be,
It calls me, claims me, the live-long day,
Sweet with the sounds and the scents of May,
And the wind in the linden-tree ;
The wild birds sing in the heart of Spring,
And the green boughs beckon me.

" Far, and far, in the distance dim,
Thy fortune waiteth thee ! "—
I know not where, but the world is fair
With many a strange countree ;
The wild birds sing in the heart of Spring,
And the green boughs beckon me.

So many ways I may never win,
Skies I may never see !
O wood-ways sweet for the vagrant feet,
What may not come to be ?—
What do they sing in the heart of Spring,
And where do they beckon me ?

Farewell, farewell, to my father's house !
Farewell, true-love, to thee !
Dear, and dear, are the kind hearts here,
And dear mine own roof-tree—
But the wild birds sing in the heart of Spring,
And the green boughs beckon me.

WESTWARD HO!

THE wind blows warm and the skies are gay,
Gone is the last day left of May ;
Summer has come at last,
But the best of the year is over,
Past with the prime of the blossoming time
And the little green buds in the clover.

The peonies flaunt their damask pride,
The red rose flames by the garden-side,
Summer holds royal state ;
The nightingale's note is stronger,
But the best of his tune was sung ere June
And the cowslips blow no longer.

But the end of play is yet to see,
And the best time still is the time to be ;
So it's hey for the onward way !
To the bourne where the blue mists hover ;
What may not flower in the evening hour
Or the westering sun discover ?

ON THE DOWNS

BROAD and bare to the skies
The great Down-country lies,
Green in the glance of the sun,
Fresh with the clean salt air ;
Screaming the gulls rise from the fresh-turned mould,
Where the round bosom of the wind-swept wold
Slopes to the valley fair.

Where the pale stubble shines with golden gleam
The silver ploughshare cleaves its hard-won way
Behind the patient team,
The slow black oxen toiling through the day
Tireless, impassive still,
From dawning dusk and chill
To twilight grey.

Far off, the pearly sheep
Along the upland steep
Follow their shepherd from the wattled fold,
With tinkling bell-notes falling sweet and cold
As a stream's cadence, while a skylark sings
High in the blue, with eager, outstretched wings,
Till the strong passion of his joy be told.

But when the day grows old,
And night cometh fold on fold,
Dulling the western gold,
Blackening bush and tree,
Veiling the ranks of cloud,
In their pallid pomp and proud,
That hasten home from the sea,

Listen—now and again, if the night be still enow,
You may hear the distant sea range to and fro
Tearing the shingly bourne of his bounden track,
Moaning with hate as he fails and falleth back ;

The Downs are peopled then ;
Fugitive, low-browed men
Start from the slopes around ;
Over the murky ground
Crouching they run with rough-wrought bow and spear,
Now seen, now hid, they rise and disappear,
Lost in the gloom again.

Soft on the dew-fall damp
Scarce sounds the measured tramp
Of bronze-mailed sentinels,
Dark on the darkened fells
Guarding the camp.

The Roman watch-fires glow
Red on the dusk ; and harsh
Cries a heron flitting slow
Over the valley marsh
Where the sea-mist gathers low.

Closer, and closer yet
Draweth the night's dim net
Hiding the troubled dead :
No more to see or know
But a black waste lying below,
And a glimmering blank o'erhead.

THE FARM ON THE LINKS

GREY o'er the pallid links, haggard and forsaken,
Still the old roof-tree hangs rotting overhead,
Still the black windows stare sullenly to seaward,
Still the blank doorway gapes, open to the dead.

What is it cries with the crying of the curlews?
What comes apace on those fearful, stealthy feet,
Back from the chill sea-deeps, gliding o'er the sand-dunes,
Home to the old home, once again to meet?

What is to say as they gather round the hearth-stone,
Flameless and dull as the feuds and fears of old?
Laughing and fleering still, menacing and mocking,
Sadder than death itself, harsher than the cold.

Woe for the ruined hearth, black with dule and evil,
Woe for the wrong and the hate too deep to die!
Woe for the deeds of the dreary days past over,
Woe for the grief of the gloomy days gone by!

Where do they come from? furtive and despairing,
Where are they bound for? those that gather there,
Slow, with the sea-wind sobbing through the chambers,
Soft, with the salt mist stealing up the stair!

Names that are nameless now, names of dread and loathing,
Banned and forbidden yet, dark with spot and stain:
Only the old house watches and remembers,
Only the old home welcomes them again.

A VIGIL

ON either side the gate,
Looking out o'er the land,
The two gaunt poplars stand ;
Silent they watch and wait :
A red rose grows by the fastened door,
And blooms for those who will come no more
Up the pathway straight.

Empty are byre and stall,
But the waters flash and gleam,
And the low trees by the stream
Let their yellow leaflets fall
Bright as of old ; and the waste vine flings
Her strangling tangle of leaves and rings
O'er the ruined wall.

Who cometh hushed and late
Here in the dusk ! For whom
Do the blood-red roses bloom
And the faithful poplars wait ?
What is it steals through the crumbling gate,
With soundless feet on the pathway straight,
In the twilight gloom ?

TWO SONGS

THE sun is gone from the valleys,
The air breathes fresh and chill ;
On the barn-roof yellow with lichen
A robin is singing shrill.

Like a tawny leaf is his bosom,
Like a dead leaf is his wing ;
He is glad of the coming winter
As the thrush is glad of the spring.

The sound of a shepherd's piping
Comes down from a distant fold,
Like the ripple of running water,
As tuneless, and sweet, and cold.

The two songs mingle together ;
Like and unlike are they,
For one sounds tired and plaintive,
And one rings proud and gay.

They take no thought of their music,
The bird and the shepherd lad ;
But the bird-voice thrills with rapture,
And the human note is sad.

A SOUTH COAST IDYLL

BENEATH these sun-warmed pines among the heather,
A white goat, bleating, strains his hempen tether,
A purple stain dreams on the broad blue plain,
The waters and the west wind sing together.

The soft grey lichen creeps o'er ridge and hollow,
Where swift and sudden skims the slim sea swallow ;
The hid cicalas play their viols all the day,
Merry of heart, although they may not follow.

Beyond yon slope, out-wearied with his reaping,
With vine-bound brows, young Daphnis lies a-sleeping ;
Stolen from the sea on feet of ivory,
The white nymphs whisper, through the pine stems peeping.

We hear their steps, yet turn to seek them never,
Nor scale the sunny slope in fond endeavour ;
It may not be, too swiftly would they flee
Our world-stained gaze and come no more for ever.

Pan, Pan is piping in the noontide golden,
Let us lie still, as in a dream enfolden,
Hear by the sea the airs of Arcady,
And feel the wind of tresses un beholden.

AFTER SUNSET

A WHITE star in an opal sky
Peeps o'er pale cloud-wreaths drifting by :
Across the plain a small gold eye
Blinks from the blue profundity.

CLOUD ARMIES

BEYOND the dark bourne of the hill
The grey cloud-armies fight and fly :
Colossal heroes of the sky
Rank upon rank the welkin fill :
With lance and glaive uplifted high
They chase the flagging enemy,
And darkness finds them fighting still.

IN THE ORCHARD

THE sunlight fades and flickers
And swoons in the flowering grass,
Where, dappled with sun and shadow,
The slow sheep wandering pass.

The wind comes up from the marshes,
A soft wind sunny and low ;
It kisses the rosy apples,
And tosses them to and fro.

It rustles the dim green leafage
That flutters against the blue,
Fresh as the breath of autumn
It murmurs the orchard through.

The low trees, dun and silver,
Lean over the shepherd lad,
Who pipes in the mellow sunshine
An old air, simple and sad.

So sad, so sweet in the sunshine
It quavers, that foolish tune,
It fills with a nameless trouble
The tremulous autumn noon.

O sad, O strange in the sunshine,
To think that the day must be !
To think of the fragrant autumns
I shall not feel nor see.

ILLUSIONS

THEY say our best illusions soonest fly—
Bright, many-tinted birds on rainbow wing,
Adown the dim dawn-valleys vanishing
Long ere our noon be white upon the sky :
Nay, never so, in sooth ; ourselves go by,
Leaving the sun that shines, the birds that sing,
The hazy, golden glammers of the Spring,
The summer dawning's clear obscurity.

O woven sorceries of sun and shade !
O bare brown Downs by grasslands glad and green !
Deep, haunted woods, with shadows thick between ;
Young leaves, with every year, new-born, remade ;
Fair are ye still, and fair have ever been—
While we, ephemera, but fail and fade.

HESTERNÆ ROSÆ

BETWEEN the bounds of night and day,
Far out into the west they lie,
More sweet than any song may say,
The red rose-gardens of the sky.

Beyond the sunset wrack forlorn,
Of tower and temple overthrown,
Of fallen fort and banner torn,
Burns the red flame of roses blown.

Through jewelled jalousies ajar,
That ruddy lustre shines aslant
From terraced vistas stretching far,—
The mellow light of old romaunt.

'Tis there the vanished roses blow
In splendour of eternal prime,
That graced the summers long ago,
The royal revels of old time.

The faded pageants' flush and bloom,
The pomp and pride of all things fair,
Like golden censers of perfume
Exhale upon that haunted air.

The rainbow fountains splash and play,
The falling water gleams and pales,
While echoes every cloistered way
With piping of the nightingales.

And who are they whose happy feet
May thread that petal-clustered maze,
Of all who found the roses sweet,
Of all who sang the summer's praise ?

We know not of their name or kin,
So far those garden alleys seem!
For there no living man may win
Save on the light wings of a dream.

The brazen mountains tower between,
With crag, and peak, and sheer abyss,
And many a shadow-hung ravine,
And many an airy precipice.

Oh, deep into the west they lie,
Beyond the swiftest swallows' flight,
The red rose-gardens of the sky,
Between the bounds of day and night.

AT THE FERRY

HERE by the stream I sit,
Where the dull water floweth evermore,—
The listless water lapping on the shore—
This long low strand by sun and stars unlit.

Knee-deep in river musk
I hear the black-leaved poplars sigh and sway,
The plash of oars upon the water-way
As Charon's boat swings huge upon the dusk.

I watch the phantoms land,
And some step shoreward faint and shuddering,
With brows rose-garlanded for life's fair Spring ;
And others mute and sore bewildered stand,

With eyes bedimmed and dazed
In the new twilight-gloom ;—yet some there be,
That seek the smooth still haven longingly
And through the gloaming wander unamazed.

But when she cometh—fair
And passing sweet this murky land shall be,
Soul of my soul—unmet by shore or sea—
Whom knew I never in the upper air,

Then sudden day shall dawn,
And wheresoe'er her lovely feet be set
Shall spring the crocus and the violet,
And lilies white as ivory new-sawn.

Where never daylight shone,
Before her face a tremulous gold ray
Shall turn to golden mist this twilight grey,
And roses blossom here in Acheron.

THE NIGHTINGALE'S CHILDREN

It is an antique superstition that the nightingale's children are born dead, and she sings them alive.

HARK, a voice that cries and calls,
As the summer twilight falls ;
Deep with longing, keen with pain,
Sobbing through the summer rain.

“Wake, wake, wake !
Ere my heavy heart doth break !”

’Tis the bird of silver tongue
Singing summer leaves among,
Calling to her children dead
With the wet leaves overhead :
In the living, leafy wood,
Calling on her silent brood
Ever still and lifeless born
To the nightingale forlorn.

“Wake, wake, wake !
Waken ere my heart doth break !”

Nightingale of golden throat !
Sobbing forth thy silver note ;
Were it ours, thy charmèd skill,
Might we raise our dead at will.
Is there aught we would not give ?
Would we leave, so they might live,
Aught unventured, aught unsaid,
Could they wake, the dreams born dead ?

DORINDA'S MIRROR

THROUGH the gleaming shadowed space
Of my mirror, hanging low,
Trip to me in measured pace
Jingling airs of long ago ;
O'er my shoulder, sad and slow,
Phantom faces peer and pass ;
Tarnished colours come and go
In the faded looking-glass.

Murmuring the shadows rise ;
Rustling hoop and flirted fan,
Ghostly laughter, ghostly sighs,
Fill the misty circle's span—
“ Well-a-day that beauty flies ! ”
Maid and mistress—dame and lass,
Lift to mine their wistful eyes
From the faded looking-glass.

Hoary mirror, stained and grey,
Where are all your damsels trim ?
Where the folk of yesterday,
Light and modish, staid and prim ?
None but Death, the Jester grim,
Knows the way they went,—Alas !
Still we watch our world grow dim
In a faded looking-glass.

TO MY CAT

HALF loving-kindliness and half disdain,
Thou comest to my call serenely suave,
With humming speech and gracious gestures grave,
In salutation courtly and urbane ;
Yet must I humble me thy grace to gain,
For wiles may win thee though no arts enslave,
And nowhere gladly thou abidest save
Where naught disturbs the concord of thy reign.

Sphinx of my quiet hearth ! who deign'st to dwell
Friend of my toil, companion of mine ease,
Thine is the lore of Ra and Rameses ;
That men forget dost thou remember well,
Beholden still in blinking reveries
With sombre, sea-green gaze inscrutable.

AN ENCHANTED PRINCESS

I FOUND her deep in the forest,
The beeches and elms between,
A delicate amber plane-tree
'Mid masses of bronze and green ;

A sorrowful, spell-bound princess
Awaiting her lover there.
She said : " He will know me, surely,
By the veil of my yellow hair."

" He seeks me the wide world over,
He seeks me the whole year through,
To loosen the charm that binds me—
My prince, and my lover true ! "

She shivered beneath her foliage
And sighed in the twilight chill :
" Ay me ; wilt thou find me never,
Thy love that thou seekest still ? "

" I saw him," chirruped a blackbird,
" He passed by this very spot ;
He is come and gone, O princess !
He passed—and he knew you not."

The cold wind rustled her branches
Till the yellow leaves fell slow—
" He is dead and gone, O princess,
Many a year ago."

THE LAST FAIRY

UNDER the yellow moon, when the young men and
maidens pass in the lanes,
Outcast I flit, looking down through the leaves of the elm-
trees,
Peering out over the fields as their voices grow fainter ;
Furtive and lone
Sometimes I steal through the green rushes down by the river,
Hearing shrill laughter and song while the rosy-limbed
bathers
Gleam in the dusk.
Seen, they would pass me disdainful, or stone me unwitting ;
No room is left in their hearts for my kinsfolk or me.
Fain would I, too, fading out like a moth in the twilight,
Follow my kin,
Whither I know not, and ever I seek but I find not—
Whither I know not, nor knoweth the wandering swallow ;
“Where are they, where ?”
Oft-times I cry ; but I hearken in vain for their footsteps,
Always in vain.

High in a last year's nest, in the boughs of the pine-tree,
Musing I sit, looking up to the deeps of the sky,
Clasping my knees as I watch there and wonder, forsaken ;
Ever the hollow sky
Voiceless and vast, and the golden moon silently sailing,
Look on my pain and they care not,
There is none that remembers :
Only the nightingale knows me—she knows and remembers—
Deep in the dusk of the thicket she sorrows for me.

Yet, on the wings of the wind sweeping over the uplands,
Fitfully borne,

Murmuring echoes remembered—the ghosts of old voices
Faint as a dream, and uncertain as cloud-shadowed sunlight,
Fall on mine ear.

Whence do they call me? From golden-dewed valleys forgotten?

Or from the strongholds of eld, where red banners of
sunset

Flame o'er the sea?

Or from anear, on the dim airy slopes of the dawn-world,
Over light-flowering meads between daybreak and sunrise
Level and grey?

Truly I know not, but steadfast and longing I listen,
Straining mine ears for the lilt of their tinkling laughter
Sweeter than sheep-bells at even;—I watch and I hearken.
O for the summons to sound! For the pipes plaining shrilly,
Calling me home!

BORDERLAND

THE sun shines fair aboun the brae,
 And the leaf upon the tree :
 But my heart is wae for the outland grey
 Where the Elfin meadows be.

My heart is wae for yon summer night
 I would sae fain forget :
 On the green brae-side as I watched my sheep,
 I canna tell how I fell asleep,
 But I mind the waking yet.

I held my een, for I couldna ken
 How siccan a thing could be :—
 Flock and fell were vanished and gane,
 And I lay out on an unco plain
 By the waves o' a sounding sea.

The mead was a' in a licht, licht mist
 O' flowers tall and fair ;
 Blithe rang the bells on the mantles green,
 Bonny an' bricht glowed the gowden een,
 And the locks o' the lint-white hair.

My heart gaed oot to that winsome folk
 Wi' their great e'en glancing wide,
 An' their limbs as licht as a willow-withe,
 The bonny bit things sae kind an' blithe—
 "Gude keep ye a' !" I cried.

There cam' a crash and a wailing cry,
 An' mirk, mirk grew the nicht :
 A hollow wind gaed whistling by
 Wi' rustling noises, thin an' dry,
 An' fleering laughter licht—

Yet, wi' the mirth cam' a wailing sound
Like a bairnie greeting sair ;
A sma' hand touched me, saft as snaw,
A cauld breith sighed, "Ye maun come awa' "
An' I saw, nor kenned, nae mair.

Gane was the flock o' the Elfin folk,
Gane were the gowans rare,
Gane was the silvery meadow still ;
An' the birds piped clear i' the dawning chill
On the brae-side braid an' bare.

O the sun shines bricht aboune the brae,
An' the leaf upon the tree,
But my heart is wae for yon outland grey
Where the Elfin-meadows be.

An' it's O that there could I win ance mair,
Or I at rest nicht be,
Low and alane wi' a tall heid-stane
An' the green mools over me.

THE MOOR GIRL'S WELL

WHERE the still sunshine falls
On faded splendours of old days long done—
The Moorish castle halls
Void and forsaken, save for wind and sun—
Lies a square court-yard fenced with painted walls.
There, where the yellow sunlight lies asleep,
Bound in a drowsy spell,
Glimmers that silent water, clear and deep,
Our village maidens call the Moor Girl's Well.

Fair are the village maidens—kind and fair—
And black-browed Manuela smiles on me,
Driving her white goats homeward leisurely
Up from the pastures through the evening air,
And I fling back her jest,
Laughing, with all the will to woo her—yet
I pass—the words unspoke, mine eyelids wet.
Why, my heart knoweth best.

Through the grey dusk of dawn
I went one autumn morning, long ago,
Forth, with my flock behind me trailing slow ;
And to that castle in the vale below—
I know not why—my vagrant steps were drawn.

And I beheld a woman, fair and young,
Beside the well-spring in the court-yard bare,
Dabbling her slim feet in the water there,
And singing softly in some outland tongue ;
No veil about her golden beauty clung—
No veil nor raiment rare,
Save but her dusky hair.

Sweetly she smiled on me, and, lisping, spake,
Even as a child that strives to say aright
Some unlearned language for its teacher's sake ;
Her long eyes pierced me with their diamond light.
She told me of an old spell laid on her
That bound her in the semblance of a snake,
Lonely and mute as in the sepulchre.

And he who would this bitter bondage break
Must suffer her in serpent form to cling
Close to his breast, unshrinking, undismayed,
And let her cold kiss on his lips be laid
Thrice without faltering.

All this I promised her, for fervently
I longed to free her from the evil spell—
Pity and love so swiftly wrought on me !
(Scarce I beheld her but I loved her well.)
Then, as I spake, she vanished suddenly,
And o'er the marble came
A great snake, brighter than a shifting flame ;

With scales of emerald and of amethyst
Her lithe coils dazzled me, and yet the same
Shone her sad eyes ; but quickly, ere I wist,
She twined about me, clammy-chill and cold,
Staying my life-breath with her strangling fold ;

The bright eyes neared mine own, the thin mouth hissed,
And I, nigh swooning, shrank from her embrace.
“Leave me,” I gasped, and turned aside my face—
“Leave me, and loose me from thy loathly hold !”

The icy bands fell from me ; numb with pain,
Half blind, I sank beside the Moor Girl's Well,
Hearing a sough as of the summer rain,
A slow, sad voice from out the depths complain,
“Redoubled tenfold is the cruel spell.”

And sometimes when the yellow dawn is chill

The memory grips my heart so that I rise,
And go with hurried footsteps down the hill

Where the lone court-yard lies,
And kneeling gaze into those waters still

Beneath the quiet skies :

"Only come back and I shall do thy will!"

I seek, and still the steely deep denies
The piercing sorrow of her diamond eyes ;

I seek, but only see

Mine own gaze back at me.

A BALLAD OF THE WERE-WOLF

THE gudewife sits i' the chimney-neuk,
An' looks on the loupin' flame;
The rain fa's chill, and the win' ca's shrill,
Ere the auld gudeman comes hame.

"Oh, why is your cheek sae wan, gudewife?
An' why do ye glower on me?
Sae dour ye luik i' the chimney-neuk,
Wi' the red licht in your e'e!

"Yet this nicht should ye welcome me,
This ae nicht mair than a',
For I hae scotched yon great grey wolf
That took our bairnies twa.

"'Twas a sair, sair strife for my very life,
As I warstled there my lane;
But I'll hae her heart or e'er we part,
Gin ever we meet again.

"An' 'twas ae sharp stroke o' my bonny knife
That gar'd her haud awa';
Fu' fast she went out-owre the bent
Wi'outen her right fore-paw.

"Gae tak' the foot o' the drumlie brute,
And hang it upo' the wa';
An' the next time that we meet, gudewife,
The tane of us shall fa'."

He's flung his pouch on the gudewife's lap,
I' the firelicht shinin' fair,
Yet naught they saw o' the grey wolf's paw,
For a bluidy hand lay there.

O hooly, hooly rose she up,
Wi' the red licht in her e'e,
Till she stude but a span frae the auld gudeman
Whiles never a word spak' she.

But she stripped the claiths frae her lang richt arm,
That were wrappit roun' and roun',
The first was white, an' the last was red ;
And the fresh bluid dreeped adown.

She stretchit him out her lang right arm,
An' cauld as the deid stude he.
The flames louped bricht i' the gloamin' licht—
There was nae hand there to see !

THE GYPSY WOOER

THE young lords rade frae east and west,
Sae blithe were they and bonnie,
And all to court our lady gay,
For she was best of ony.

The young lords rade to east and west,
Wi' heavy dule and grieving,
Their hearts were wae, for she said them nay,
And bade them cease their deaving.

She lookèd frae her bower window,
The sun it shone sae brightly,
An' over field and over fell
A gypsy steppit lightly.

The gypsy man cam' doun the brae,
And clear his pipes were singing
An outland sang as wild and fey
As Elfin bridles ringing.

O whiles the sang went wud wi' joy,
And whiles it sorrowed sairly;
The saut tear stood in our lady's e'e,
It rang sae sweet and rarely.

"An' are ye come at last?" she said,
"An' do I see and hear ye?
If this be no my ain true love,
Then nane shall be my dearie."

"An' where hae ye been sae lang?" quo' she,
"An' why cam ye ne'er before, O!
If ye be no my ain true love,
My heart will break for sorrow."

O, never a word the gypsy said,
And naething did he linger,
But his een laughed bright as he turned his head,
And beckoned wi' his finger.

She's casten off his silken snood,
And ta'en her mantle to her,
An' she's awa' to Silverwood,
To follow the gypsy wooer.

BALLAD OF THE WILLOW POOL

THERE was never a face, to my mind, like hers,
Nor ever a voice so sweet ;
I would hearken aye at set o' the sun,
When the last long furrow was turned and done,
For her song and her lightsome feet.

'Tween the summer sward and gold of the west,
Through the quiet air and cool,
She would lead her goats on their homeward way
By the grass-grown road and the sedges grey,
By the side of the Willow Pool.

Curst and curst be the Willow Pool,
And the life that dwells therein !
'Twas never a rival of flesh and blood,
But a chill, unholy fiend of the flood
That tempted her soul to sin.

What glistening mesh could the Neckan weave
For a soul so pure and fair ?
She would dream all day in the old black boat,
And she wore a circlet about her throat
Of a single red-gold hair.

One summer twilight I saw her lean,
Low down to the water's edge.
"Farewell," she wailed, "to the old days o'er,
Farewell for ever and evermore !"
And she sank through the waving sedge.

The spell that had bound me snapped and broke,
I sped to the water-side ;

There was never a ring nor a steely track
In the water gleaming cold and black,
No sound—but a curlew cried.

And ever at dusk as that summer waned,
And the green fields turned to brown,
I would take my pipes to the slope above,
And play the airs that she used to love
Ere the Neckan lured her down.

There was no star once in the murky sky,
But a sullen, blood-red moon ;
The waters gleamed and the air was still ;
The voice of my reeds rang cracked and shrill
As I strove to shape the tune.

But I strove till the reeds sang keen and clear
As they never had sung before
(Sang till the black pool heaved and stirred),
Sweet as the song of a prisoned bird
That sings for the Spring once more.

A faint, faint cry rose up through the gloom—
I watched with a beating heart—
But the voice died out in a strangled wail ;
Longing and love could naught avail
'Gainst the powers of Evil Art.

.
The morrow's dawn was dim and grey,
With a mist like a winding-sheet ;
She leaned in the dusk by my open door,
Slid through my arms to the rush-strewn floor,
Like a drowned corpse at my feet.

There were pale bright gems at her breast and throat,
Their like had I never known ;
She was wrapped in a web of blue and gold,
Her eyes were closed and her lips were cold,
And her breast like the marble-stone.

Her folk came up from the harvest fields,
But they crossed themselves amain ;
The mother that bore her turned away,
Shuddered aloof from the poor cold clay,
Of my lass come home again.

So I drew from her limbs the glistening gear
Where the water dripped and ran,
I wrung the drops from her yellow hair
And wrapped her in linen white and fair,
White webs that my mother span.

And the carven stones and the woven gold
(Ill meshes of death and dool !),
And the dim blue gown, like a coiling snake,
I flung far out to the sedgy lake,
To their lord in the Willow Pool.

I took my store in the leathern pouch,
(Laid by for our plenishing),
I sought the priest and I prayed him lay
My lass in the hallowed ground that day,
Secure from the Evil Thing.

He said me nay—"Through the kirkyard gates
No corse accurst may win,
Nor ghoul in its semblance—who can tell ?
For this is sure, in the deepest Hell
Bides that soul seared black with sin."

So I digged her grave on a shadowed slope
Where the poplars sigh and stir,
I laid her down with her face to the west,
With a sprig of the rowan athwart her breast,
And a cross 'tween the Pool and her.

The priest cries shame on my dead white dove,
(May the foul fiend hunt his track !);

If she loved the Neckan?—nay, what then?
Glamour is strong past mortal ken—
And my piping brought her back.

My heart's like the water, dark and still,
With a curse for its inmost guest;
The Neckan keepeth his gems and gold,
The priest and his flock are safe in the fold,
And my true-love lies at rest.

VESPERTILIA

VESPERTILIA

IN the late autumn's dusky-golden prime,
When sickles gleam and rusts the idle plough,
The time of apples dropping from the bough,
And yellow leaves on sycamore and lime ;
O'er grassy uplands far above the sea
Often at twilight would my footsteps fare,
And oft I met a stranger-woman there
Who stayed and spake with me :
Hard by the ancient barrow smooth and green,
Whose rounded burg swells dark upon the sky,
Lording it high o'er dusky dell and dene,
We wandered—she and I.

Ay, many a time as came the evening hour
And the red moon rose up behind the sheaves,
I found her straying by that barren bower,
Her fair face glimmering like a white wood-flower
That gleams through withered leaves.
Her mouth was redder than the pimpernel,
Her eyes seemed darker than the purple air
'Neath brows half hidden—I remember well—
'Mid mists of cloudy hair.

And all about her breast, around her head,
Was wound a wide veil shadowing cheek and chin,
Woven like the ancient grave-gear of the dead :
A twisted clasp and pin

Confined her long blue mantle's heavy fold
Of splendid tissue dropping to decay,

Faded like some rich raiment worn of old,
With rents and tatters gaping to the day.
Her sandals wrought about with threads of gold,
Scarce held together still, so worn were they,
Yet sewn with winking gems of green and blue,
And pale as pearls her naked feet shone through.

And all her talk was of some outland rare,
Where myrtles blossom by the blue sea's rim,
And life is ever good and sunny and fair ;
"Long since," she sighed, "I sought this island grey—
Here, where the winds moan and the sun is dim,
When his beaked galleys cleft the ocean spray,
For love I followed him."

Once, as we stood, we heard the nightingale
Pipe from a thicket on the sheer hillside,
Breathless she hearkened, still and marble-pale,
Then turned to me with strange eyes open wide—
"Now I remember ! . . . Now I know !" said she,
"Love will be life . . . ah, Love *is* Life !" she cried,
"And thou—thou lovest me ?"

I took her chill hands gently in mine own,
"Dear, but no love is mine to give," I said,
"My heart is colder than the granite stone
That guards my true-love in her grassy bed ;
My faith and troth are hers, and hers alone,
Are hers . . . and she is dead."

Weeping, she drew her veil about her face,
And faint her accents were and dull with pain ;
"Poor Vespertilia ! gone her days of grace,
Now doth she plead for love—and plead in vain :
None praise her beauty now, or woo her smile !

.

Ah, hadst thou loved me but a little while,
I might have lived again."

Then slowly as a wave along the shore
She glided from me to yon sullen mound ;
My frozen heart, relenting, smote me sore—
Too late—I searched the hollow slopes around,
Swiftly I followed her, but nothing found,
Nor saw nor heard her more.

And now, alas, my true-love's memory,
Even as a dream of night-time half-forgot,
Fades faint and far from me,
And all my thoughts are of the stranger still,
Yea, though I loved her not :
I loved her not—and yet—I fain would see,
Upon the wind-swept hill,
Her dark veil fluttering in the autumn breeze ;
Fain would I hear her changeful voice awhile,
Soft as the wind of spring-tide in the trees,
And watch her slow, sweet smile.

Ever the thought of her abides with me
Unceasing as the murmur of the sea ;
When the round moon is low and night-birds flit,
When sink the stubble-fires with smouldering flame,
Over and o'er the sea-wind sighs her name,
And the leaves whisper it.

"*Poor Vespertilia*," sing the grasses sere,
"*Poor Vespertilia*," moans the surf-beat shore ;
Almost I feel her very presence near—
Yet she comes nevermore.

THE CITY OF DREAM

WHEN Spring was mine and all the ways were green,
And all the valleys veiled in golden mist,
And all the shadows pearl and amethyst,
Through the dim maze of morrows unforeseen
Fair and far-glimmering as the dusky fire
That lights a pine-wood when the sunset dies—
Faint as the cuckoo calling as it flies—
Sweet as the Spring's own secret-smitten lyre—
Now shining clear with sun-washed roof and spire,
Now, wrapped and compassed round with mysteries—
A haunted palace bowered in ancient trees—
I knew the City of my Heart's Desire.

.

Even as a late-remembered tryst, it drew
My wandering feet forever to the quest :
Dreaming, I saw it through the grey dawn dew,
Waking, I dreamed for aye to find the clue,
Past this tree-shadowed slope—that blue hill's crest—
Eager I sought my paradise anew
With every sun that fared from east to west.

.

The autumn evening closes, mild and grey,
Lit by a fading sunset's narrow gleam,
And still to-morrow-wards I turn and say
—"There, peradventure, I shall find the way"—
And still a strange voice calls by wood and stream,
And still the vision glimmers strangely bright—
The wide world o'er I wander, wander, yet,
And still to-morrow-wards my face is set
To seek the city of my heart's delight.

By pastoral plains with purple rivers twined,
By gardens red with amaranth and rose,
Where crumbling towns lie steeped in rich repose,
The grey towers sleeping in the sun and wind,
By gabled street and grassy orchard-close,
I go—and all as painted shadows seem—
Nor moved to linger, nor to look behind
I pass, and many a happy pleasaunce find,
But never the town, the country, of my dream.

HIC JACET

AND is it possible?—and must it be—
At last, indifference 'twixt you and me?
We who have loved so well,
Must we indeed fall under that strange spell,
The tyranny of the grave?

In sullen severance patient and resigned,
By each of each forgotten out of mind—
Dear, is there none to save?
Must you whose heart makes answer to mine own,
Whose voice compels me with its every tone,
Must you forget my fealty to claim,
And I—to turn and tremble at your name,
Sunk in dull slumber neath a lichen'd stone?
Shall not my pulses leap if you be near?
Shall these endure, the sun, the wind, the rain,
And naught of all our tenderness remain,
Our joy—our hope—our fear? . . .

Sweet, 'tis the one thing certain—rail or weep,
Plead or defy, take counsel as we may,
It shall not profit us: this, only, pray
Of the blind powers that keep
The harvest of the years we sow and reap,
That naught shall sever nor estrange us—Nay,
Let us live out our great love's little day
Fair and undimmed, before we fall on sleep.

AFTER SUNSET

THE black downs tower to westward
A tomb for the buried sun,
The flats of the water meadows
Are fading from green to dun.

Dark spreads the vast arena,
Swart on the yellow light,
And out of the gloom and the silence
A strange voice cries to the night.

Cries—and a strange voice answers,
Sudden, and hoarse, and slow,
Heavy with pain past telling,
The weight of a monstrous woe.

Still, as I wait and hearken,
I know not which they may be ;
Voices of down and marshland,
Or the voice of my heart in me.

But I know that the cry they echo
Was old when the world was young,
The plaint of a nameless sorrow
Whose speech is an unknown tongue.

A SONG OF SHIPWRECK

THE gull may fly by the cliff-top high,
The hovering hawk may soar ;
But the carrion crow she bides below,
While the drowned folk swim ashore.

The drowned souls sail on the autumn gale
Between the shore and sea,
And there's never a one beneath the sun
Will bear them company.

O nowhere bound are the souls of the drowned,
Nor seaward nor for shore ;
The sun goes west and the grey gulls rest,
But the dead rest nevermore.

THE LAMP IN THE POOL

FAR down in the deep, black water
A golden lanthorn swings,
Whose lustre widens and trembles
As tremble the water rings.

Above, on the purple twilight
The moon in her glory shows,
But still with a mellower splendour
The lamp in the water glows.

Like a love-lamp set in a window
On a starless summer night,
Steadfast it gleams and beckons,
A jewel of amber light.

Steadfast it points and beckons
And ever the self-same way,
For it hangs at the gate of a palace
That knows not the light of day.

The great elms' leafy branches
Lean over the water's brink,
Where deep in their sheltering hollows
The shadows in shadows sink.

But the gold lamp in the water
It glimmers and beckons bright,
Like a love-lamp set in a window
On a murky summer night.

For him who would rise and follow
Full smooth is the path, and straight,
The way through the glistening water
That leads to the palace gate.

And he who shall cross the threshold
No more shall he strive nor weep,
Being come to the Tower of Silence,
In the Valley of Endless Sleep.

MÄRCHEN

THE old house by the waterside,
With leaded casements blear and grey,
Looks down upon the sluggish tide,
The long canal whose currents glide
Serene and slow from day to day.

And I, beneath the linden shade,
Still watch the front of carven wood—
That frowning front so strangely made,
With scroll and arch and balustrade,
And signs that none hath understood.

And none, they say, doth dwell therein—
Yet, sometimes, when the sun goes down,
Through those dim panes I seem to win
The tinkle of a mandolin,
The glamour of a golden gown.

'Tis she, I know, abideth there,
The Lady of the Locks of Gold,
Than sun and moon and stars more fair
My heart's ordained—my soul's despair—
For she is young, and I am old.

Yet some blue-glimmering night in May,
When all the lindens are in flower,
Then eld and grief shall pass away,
The vain desire, the long delay,
Ah? then shall strike my magic hour.

For she shall fling the casement wide,
Shall lean and beckon to me there,
Shall call me, softly, to her side—
So deeply loved, so long denied—
The Princess with the Golden Hair.

WALPURGIS

ALONG the valley to the sea
The steel-grey river glimmers wan.
Oh, what shall this night bring to be?
And what may come when light be gone?

Across the dark Downs, face to face,
Two sullen fires flame east and west—
The blood-red sunset's lurid space,
The blood-red moon's uprearing crest.

A weary Mænad, flushed with wine,
Between the dull dun drift she peers,
Heavy with lewd old rites malign,
Lusting for human blood and tears.

.

The sea-wind holds its breath for fear,
The black trees cringe upon the height;
Still, with her wicked, wanton leer,
The red moon menaces the night.

FANTASY

GOLD roses, climbing, clasp a casement round,
Down on the grey stone sill their sweet heads laying,
Below there stands a pale nymph ivy-crowned,
A strange air playing.

Her frail form trembles with the viol's strain,
Her shoulder leans against a fluted column,
Her eyes now shine, now plead, and now again
Watch, soft and solemn.

The fallen petals lie about her feet,
Their loose curled gold the marble terrace flecking,
Sunset and moonrise round about her meet,
Her bright hair decking.

And one within looks upward from his scroll,
Doubtful, reluctantly his clear eyes lifting,
Wherein there leaps a sudden, eager soul,
Their cold veil shifting.

"Ah, listen," thus the quivering viol pleads,
"Still are the olive-slopes where grey moths hover ;
The ripples murmur to the misty reeds ;
Maid meeteth lover.

"Yon river wandering goes to seek the sea,
Warm with the memory of day's red glory ;
Come forth and hear in magic groves with me
My wondrous story."

Smiling he stands, young laurels on his hair,
Dim dreams of joys foregone his pale brow flushing ;
Half-tearful smiles, with pitying lips one fair
Dead rose-bud brushing.

Sighing he stoops and leans upon the sill :

“Sweet, but a little while this low light lingers,
Thou canst not hinder night nor day-dawn chill
With those lithe fingers.

“Fain would I wander in the sun-stained gloom,
With thee, might this charmed hour forsake us never,
Might but my steps retraced this quiet room
Re-enter ever !”

Still sob the viol-strings their slow refrain,
Her eyes, uplifted, through a tear-film glisten—
“In years far hence I’ll come to thee again,
And thou wilt listen.

“Ah, then my spells shall compass thee around,
With wild airs whispering and fair lost faces ;
And thou shalt hearken for my viol’s sound
In shady places.”

BLACKBIRD'S SONG

SWEETHEART, I ne'er may know,
 Never may see ;
White is the blossom snow,
 Green is the lea :
Still the stream sings of you,
All the wood rings of you—
Sweetheart, oh sweetheart mine,
 Where can you be ?

True-love I ne'er may meet
 All the world through,
Dim is the dawn, and sweet,
 Deep is the dew.
Listen—oh lost and dear !
Come—for your love is here,
Here in the hazel-wood,
 Waiting for you.

VALE

THE rock-doves grieve the golden noontide still—
Deep in the darkened grove, with querulous moan,
Ever they call me from this wooded hill
Where I sit all alone.

The autumn world seems sorrowful and strange,
Though hung with gold and steeped in mellow light ;
Throughout there menaces a cloud of change,
An end of all delight.

No more the swallows wheel about the sky,
No more the blackbird whistles in the dew ;
Both rose and nightingale are gone—and I
Would follow summer too.

The ash-tree keys hang rusting on the boughs ;
Sad and insistent as an ancient tune,
Over and o'er through summer's empty house
Echoes the rock-doves' rune.

Fain would I follow, at their drowsy call,
By shadowy glades and plaintive tinkling streams,
Where never wind doth sway the tree-tops tall,
Nor earthly sun-ray gleams.

I would not watch another autumn fade,
Vext with shrill winds and stung with vain regret ;
Be it mine to seek the inviolable shade,
And—maybe—to forget.

Loosed from the narrow prison of days and nights,
Set free from Reason's rigorous castle-keep—
Roaming by misty valleys and dim heights—
The hollows and hills of sleep.

ARMISTICE

LAST night I grasped the bony hands of Death
Hard in mine own, the while, in desperate wise,
Straitly I gazed into his hollow eyes.
(We were alone beneath a linden-tree
Whose wet leaves trembled to the spring wind's breath ;
The bloom of Spring was on the purple skies.)
Heavy of heart I stood and gazed on him,
So fair the world was in that twilight dim,
So sweet its shadow-haunted mysteries.

"Tell me," I cried, "for this I needs must know,
What have we done, O cruel Death, to thee,
That thou art still our one implacable foe,
Whom naught propitiates, naught may overthrow,
Whom none escapeth, howsoe'er he flee,
But, when thou beckonest, must arise and go?"

Gently Death answered me, and musing said,
"Am I, in very truth, thine enemy?
Nay, but thine angel, pitiful and mild;
I am the parent; thou, the wayward child,
Sprung from my loins, yet holding me in dread.

"Now, as in all time past, all time to be,
I welcome those the World and Time discard,
Whom Life hath banished, whom Eld hath maimed and
 marred;
None is too vile, too full of misery.
Ever and aye my portal stands unbarred.—
Hath not thine own voice called me over and o'er?
Hounded by Care, beset and tortured sore,
Hath not thine own heart oft-times turned to me?"

“Go, and forget me yet awhile again ;
But when thy deep desire of life shall wane,
When thou art weary of all things, worst and best,—
Weary of taking thought, of Joy and Pain,
Of thine own faults and failures weariest,—
Cry to me then,—thou shalt not ask in vain ;
Come unto me, and I will give thee rest.”

GLORIA MUNDI

GIVE us the earth's whole heart but once to know,
But once to pierce the secret of the Spring,—
Give us our fill, so we at end may go
Into the starless night un murmuring.

Gold lights that beckon down the dusky way,
Where loud wheels roll, impetuous, through the night ;
The lamp-lit leaves ; the maddening airs of May ;
The heady wine of living, dark and bright.

Give us of these, and we are blest, in truth ;
The wandering foot, the keen, unflagging zest,
One with the glorious world's eternal youth,
Of all that is, and is not, first and best.

Ah, vain desire, our straitened years to mar !
Troubled we turn and listen, unreleased,
To music of a revel held afar,
Evasive echoes of a distant feast.

THE PRODIGAL SON

YESTERDAY

I turned me homeward to the little hamlet,
The small grey village on the steep hill-side ;
I passed the red kine grazing on the uplands,
 The white sheep in the fields :
Green were the elms, and green the feathery ash-trees,
Sweet, sweet and loud the birds sang in the valley,
 Though it was autumn.

Beside the old well in the shadowed lane,
Where from high banks the tall trees lean together,
I stood to watch the water drip and glisten

 Upon the frail fern-garlands ;
And lo ! there came a woman with her pitcher.
Two little children clung about her apron ;

 Around her head
She wore a linen kerchief, white as lilies,
And at her breast a knot of purple pansies
 Thrust in her bodice.

Blithely she laughed—'twas she—my Heart's Belovéd !
Trembling, I named her name—I stretched my fingers,
Touching her arm—yet never made she answer,
Seeming as though she heeded not nor heard me,
Only she said, "Make haste, make haste, my children,
The air strikes dank and chilly in the shadow ;
Come where the sun shines"—so they hastened from me ;
Far down the lane I heard their shrill, sweet talk.

Heavy of heart I sought my father's cottage,
And there a strange lad leaned upon the gate,
A stranger-maiden plied my mother's loom ;
Yet I went in and passed athwart the chamber

To the square hearth-nook where my mother sat,
Propped in her high-winged chair.

Weeping, I bowed my head upon her knees :

“Forgive me, I have come at last,” I said ;

“I am come back, to leave you nevermore.”

Yet she replied not, only sighed and shifted

The seam she sewed on nearer to the light,

And then I saw it was a shroud she wrought.

I wandered all about the garden pathways,

And marked my moss-rose choked with clambering bindweed ;

The diamond-shaped plot abloom with asters

Lilac and white,

And love-lies-bleeding with its amethyst trails :

The little wooden cote I made one winter,

To house my doves, was broken and decayed,

And, by the porch, my thrush’s wicker cage

Hung on its nail with open-dangling door.

My old dog, drowsing in a pool of sun,

Awoke and stretched. I stroked his tawny head,

But he cowered back from me, and crouched in terror,

Whining and shivering, though I still caressed him,

Murmuring fond words, familiar, foolish phrases

He once would leap to hear—

Then suddenly—

I knew—ay, then I knew in very surety

That I was dead.

D'OUTREMER

A BLACK moor and a golden sky,
Darkness and dew ;
A whirr of westering wings on high—
And dreams of you,

O far upon some outland shore
Those wings may rest,
But my heart slumbers nevermore
That seeks your breast.

O far beyond the farthest hill
The sun has set.
My wandering thoughts that track you still
Fare farther yet.

ON LETHE WHARF

ON Lethe Wharf the winds are still,
And motionless the clouds above
Yon sluggish river, dark and chill,
That healeth Hope, and Hate, and Love.

The low plain widens far away,
Beneath the mild and misty skies ;
Beyond, the land of night and day,
Our land of change and tumult, lies.

Here is no doubt—despair—surmise—
But Life and Thought with folded wings,
Watch the dull distance with dull eyes
In this grey home of hopeless things.

The cold, black water lapses by,
From bank to bank the ripples spread ;
But never bird or butterfly
Is mirrored in that tide of lead.

Only tall poppies, white and red,
Stand close together by the brink,
While on the glimmering current shed
Their fallen petals drift or sink.

And I will leave the world behind,
This springtide world of stir and fret,
To go where those dim waters wind
And never blooms the violet.

On Lethe Wharf shall be my lot,
Among the poppies, red and white,
Spring and my sorrow forsworn—forgot—
With all the dreams of day and night.

A SONG OF LONDON

THE sun's on the pavement,
The current comes and goes,
And the grey streets of London
They blossom like the rose.

Crowned with the spring sun,
Vistas fair and free ;
What joy that waits not ?
What that may not be ?

The blue-bells may beckon,
The cuckoo call—and yet—
The grey streets of London
I never may forget.

O fair shines the gold moon
On blossom-clustered eaves,
But bright blinks the gas-lamp
Between the linden-leaves.

And the green country meadows
Are fresh and fine to see,
But the grey streets of London
They're all the world to me.

NOCTURN

O THE long, long street and the sweet
Sense of the night, of the Spring !
Lamps in a glittering string,
Pointing a path for our feet.

Pointing and beckoning—where ?
Far out of thought, out of view,
Deep through the dusk and the dew :
What but seems possible there ?

O the dark Spring night and the bright
Glint of the lamps in the street !
Strange is their summons, and sweet,
O my beloved, to-night !

LONDON IN OCTOBER

AUTUMN goes wandering—wandering on her way
Down the mild slope that shortens day by day
Under these quiet skies.

Here, as the green leaves fade, the gold leaves fall,
A still enchantment widens over all,
Painting the streets with vague autumnal dyes

Like ancient tapestries ;
Touching to fantasy unfelt before
The motley hoardings' many-coloured lore ;
With every floating leaf, each sound that sighs,
Seizing the sense with something subtler yet—
The deep exhilaration of regret

For this sweet hour that flies.
The long, barge-laden stream
Bears on the roseate haze, the golden gleam ;
The leaves go hurrying at the light wind's call
As to some festival.

While we, half sorrowful, half exultant, too,
Blown by the old year's breath to meet the new,
Stretch forth our hands to greet we know not what,
So fair forever is the unknown lot !

So strong the glamour of the London street,
With dim expectancies.

Holding the heart in bondage stormy and sweet.
Here, though the dead leaves flit,
Doubt shall not hold dominion over it,
Nor age nor sorrow, but sensuous sheer delight
In the blue, lamp-hung night.

Thine are our hearts, beloved City of Mist,
Wrapped in thy veils of opal and amethyst,

Set in thy shrine of lapis-lazuli,
Dowered with the very language of the sea,
Lit with a million gems of living fire—
London, the goal of many a soul's desire!
Goddess and sphinx, thou hold'st us safe in thrall
Here while the dead leaves fall.

RUS IN URBE

A LITTLE brown finch in the plane-tree swings,
And my heart, like a cage-bird, beats its wings,
Sick with desire for the woodland ways,
The hills where the red kine graze.

Dead leaves whirl in the dusty street,
But I know the wind from the sea blows sweet,
Through dark deep clefts of the valleys green,
Where the white gulls float between.

This colourless street is bleak and bare,
But robins sing in the orchards there ;
Apples are bright on the orchard bough,
And the elms gleam golden now.

.

The wind dies out with the fading sun,
The dance of the withered leaves is done ;
A strange spell holdeth the hard grey street,
And the murky air grows sweet.

I watch from my window, looking down,
The golden lights of the great grey town—
The blue, blue dusk and the amber glare
Of gas in the twilight air.

I hear no call from the wind-swept hill,
The voice of the breaking surf is still,
And which is dearer I know no more—
The street or the far sea-shore.

AT KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY

JANUARY 21ST, 1892

THE last notes of the requiem die away ;
Lone is that chamber now where lowly and great
Together knelt to sorrow and to pray ;
Where, crowned by Death, a princely prelate lay
In more than royal state.

With sullen stroke tolls out his funeral knell—
No more, in dense interminable line,
Bowed with a grief past power of speech to tell,
Gather the multitudes who loved him well,
As to a dead saint's shrine.

Beyond the tombs the winter sun sinks red ;
Sombre and mournful as the dying day
A mighty concourse crowds with hurried tread
Among these pale memorials of the dead,
Gaunt symbols glimmering grey.

Down the long pathway comes a stately train
With swinging lights and jewelled censers fair,
And all the high insignia of his reign—
The Miserere's melancholy strain
Wails through the twilight air.

A slow chant, solemn as the voice of Doom,
In varying cadence swells : a muffled stir
Sways through that gold-lit circle round the tomb,
While the great coffer glittering through the gloom
Sinks to the sepulchre.

.
Gone the vast throng like forms of glamour shown,
The white-stoled priests, the yellow tapers' light ;
Darkness reclaims her silent city of stone—
All| hasten forth—but he lies there alone
With the chill winter night.

THE WIND'S SUMMONS

THE Wind came whining to my door,
Across the uplands from the sea,
With plaintive burden o'er and o'er,
"Oh, will you roam the world with me?"

The wintry skies were all too chill,
The wintry lands too stark and grey :
I would not do the wild Wind's will ;
I barred the door and said him nay.

But when the Night crept, vast and black,
Up the long valleys from the sea,
The cold Wind followed in his track,
And swift and stealthy followed he.

.

The mad Wind clamoured at my door ;
His voice was like the angry sea
That breaks in thunder on the shore,
And still he cried, "Come forth to me!"

The casements shook and shuddered sore,
He ranged the high walls round and round ;
My chamber rocked from roof to floor,
And all the darkness throbbed with sound.

The wintry dawn rose faint and slow,
He turned him to the frozen lea,
And aye he moaned and muttered low
Along the uplands to the sea.

Sullen and slow the Sea-Wind sped ;

“ Oh, never doubt the day shall be
When I shall come again,” he said,

“ And you come forth and follow me.

“ The lair of Night shall be your bed,

And fast and far your ghost shall flee,
When you are one with all the Dead

That roam the wide world round with me.”

FINIS

EVEN for you I shall not weep
When I at last, at last am dead,
Nor turn and sorrow in my sleep
Though you should linger overhead.

Even of you I shall not dream
Beneath the waving graveyard grass ;
One with the soul of wind and stream
I shall not heed you if you pass.

Even for you I would not wake,
Too bitter were the tears I knew,
Too dark the road I needs must take—
The road that winds away from you.

AT EVENING

ALL day the clear Spring sunshine mocked the pain
My heart strove blindly with ; the limpid skies
Stared on my grief with bright, indifferent eyes,
While all in vain, in vain,
I wrestled with the doubts that did you wrong,
The shadowy terrors of our severance
That shook my soul with threats of evil chance.

.
I strove to bridge the gulf with memories—
But sadder than the echo of a song
Sung long ago,
And fainter than the phantom of a dream
Of some fair land,
Dreamed far away in a forgotten place—
Sad as sere leaves, and faint as falling snow—
The past I summoned shrank from my embrace,
The wealth I counted withered in my hand.

.
But when the amber-coloured twilight came
And young leaves glimmered golden overhead,
Over and o'er a blackbird piped your name
From some green shelter in the garden stead
And then fell silent—and the silence grew
Full of strange solace, and the sense of you.

THE GOLDEN HOUR

STEEPED in a mellow, orange-golden glow,
Dark, clustered elms touch hands across the lane,
Strange glories crown the gabled stacks arow,
And gild each lumbering amber-laden wain.

In jewelled bravery of gold and green
The pallid stubble glistens to the sky,
'Neath limpid seas of luminous air serene,
Where homing rooks float drowsily on high.

Infinite pleasure takes the sense—and yet
Fades in a moment, smitten into pain ;
Changed for a fruitless passion of regret,
As elfin treasure turns to earth again.

And gladness falters like a silenced song—
Sinks with the flame of sunset's coloured fire ;
So short th' illumined hour—Alas, so long
The inextinguishable vain desire !

EX UMBRA

I N twilight while I walk alone
A strange voice calls me, clear and low ;
A shadowy hand that seeks my own,
Cold as the wind and soft as snow,
Still leads me, leads me as I pass
Across the grey December grass.

The village windows beckon still
With glow of amber and of gold ;
But my way lies along the hill,
My road must cross the frosty wold ;
And still I feel and still I see
The darkness round me deep and free.

SHEEP-BELLS

DOWN from the upland pastures smooth and high,
Slopes where the light of sunset lingers long,
Where the lone herdsman leads his pearly throng
O'er emerald greensward girt with topaz sky,
Floateth a strange, a magical, melody,—
Pæan and plaint, compact of laughter and sigh,
Filling the yellow eventide with song.

.

Ah, never thus rang pastoral serenade—
No mortal flocks are folded on that height,
No earthly measure ever tripped so light,
No earthly bells such delicate music made—
Too sweet, too wild, the limpid numbers run—
Enchanted echoes blown in eddying flight,
Borne from some wandering faëry cavalcade,
Or charmed lutes by elfin fingers played,
Tinkling a farewell to the setting sun.

IN THE VALLEY

MYRIAD birds in the thicket sing,
Glancing and flitting on eager wing ;
Leaves are green on the branches still,
But the autumn airs breathe chill.

Spring is over and Summer gone,
But the birds in the valley still sing on
To the broad brown hills and the quiet sky,
Though Winter is drawing nigh.

The slow wind sighs and the skies are grey,
But the little birds pipe so shrill, so gay ;
So sweet to-day are the songs they sing
They will waken the banished Spring.

AVE ATQUE VALE

FAREWELL, my Youth ! for now we needs must part,
For here the paths divide ;
Here hand from hand must sever, heart from heart,—
Divergence deep and wide.

You'll wear no withered roses for my sake,
Though I go mourning for you all day long,
Finding no magic more in bower or brake,
No melody in song.

Grey Eld must travel in my company
To seal this severance more fast and sure.
A joyless fellowship, i' faith, 'twill be,
Yet must we fare together, I and he,
Till I shall tread the footpath way no more.

But when a blackbird pipes among the boughs,
On some dim, iridescent day in spring,
Then I may dream you are remembering
Our ancient vows.

Or when some joy foregone, some fate foresworn,
Looks through the dark eyes of a violet,
I may re-cross the set, forbidden bourne,
I may forget
Our long, long parting for a little while,
Dream of the golden splendours of your smile,
Dream you remember yet.

IN BLUE AND GOLD

THE blue sea slumbers in a mist of heat
Beside the amber shore,
At anchor floats a brown-winged fisher fleet
With idle sail and oar.

The pointed stooks against a purple sky
Give back the sunset gold—
I hear the wheeling swallows call and cry,
I watch the day grow old.

The day goes down in splendours strange and deep
Emblazoning land and sea—
O wind that sing'st this happy earth to sleep,
Bring endless sleep to me!

A MIDNIGHT HARVEST

CORNISH COAST

THE white, white gulls wheel inland,
The breakers rake and grind ;
The swagging clouds go swiftly
With a shattering gale behind ;
What are the white gulls crying
Above the ripened corn ?
“O, harvest will be over
Before the morrow’s morn :
No need to whet the sickle,
No need to bring the wain,
The storm shall reap on the cliff-side steep,
And the west wind thresh the grain.”

The white, white gulls whirl gaily,
They keep a merry coil,
But the farmer’s heart is heavy
For all his months of toil :
He hears the white gulls’ chorus,
Their cries of joyous scorn :
“O, harvest will be over
Or ever comes the morn :
Now go you to your bed, Farmer,
Lie down and take your ease ;
The wind shall reap while you rest and sleep,
And the storm shall scour the leas.”

The white, white foam flies upward,
The black rocks show their teeth,
Dark frowns the towering headland
They grin and gird beneath ;

What are the wild gulls crying
Far up the valleys grey !

“ Hey for the midnight harvest,
The merry breakers’ play !
There’ll be harvest out at sea, Farmer,
And harvest here on land :
There’ll be rare ripe grain for the hungry main,
And drowned folk for the strand.”

MIRAGE

WITH milk-white dome and minaret
Most fair my Promised City shone ;
Beside a purple river set
The waving palm-trees beckoned on.

O yon, I said, must be my goal
No matter what the danger be,
The chosen haven of my soul,
How hard soe'er the penalty.

The goal is gained—the journey done—
Yet naught is here but sterile space,
But whirling sand and burning sun,
And hot winds blowing in my face.

SUNSET ON HENNACLIFF

LAPPED in the low light of the westering sun,
The wild gulls circle seaward one by one,
Wheeling and wailing, querulous and shrill,
Now silver-white, now dun,
As the late lustre touches them at will :
Even their dark fortress set in the blue sea,
Fringed with perpetual foam,
Gives back a glory from its lichened dome
Where no man's foot may be,
And yon gaunt headland's massive masonry,
Towering on high above the sea-birds' hold,
Gleams like the Mystic Rose
With dull rich dyes of amaranth and gold :
Stronger and stronger grows.
A glamour of gladness, infinite, untold ;
The hour is full of strange assurances,
Once more the worn heart knows
A golden anchorage of exquisite ease,
Where magic water flows.

.
A faint sea-fragrance dwells upon the air ;
Autumn's enchantment layeth hold on me,
Stirring the sense to vaguest pageantry,
To fitful memories of days so fair
As no days ever were.

TRAVELLER'S JOY

OVER the hills and far away
The road is long on a summer day ;
Dust glares white in the noontide heat,
But the Traveller's Joy grows strong and sweet ;
Down the hollow and up the slope
It binds the hedge with a silken rope.
O the sun that shines and the dust that flies,
And the fresh green leaves for tired eyes—
Green leaves, and the summer's hope.

Through the valley and over the down
The withering hedge bends dry and brown,
The sycamore leaves hang rent and seared,
And the Traveller's Joy is Old Man's Beard—
Up the marsh and over the lea
The milk-white gulls sail up from the sea—
And it's O for the wind and the weeping rain,
And the summers that never shall rise again
Whatever may come to be.

EPITAPH

NOW lay thee down to sleep, and dream of me ;
Though thou art dead and I am living yet,
Though cool thy couch and sweet thy slumbers be,
Dream—do not quite forget.

Sleep all the autumn, all the winter long,
With never a painted shadow from the past
To haunt thee ; only, when the blackbird's song
Wakens the woods at last,

When the young shoots grow lusty overhead,
Here, where the spring sun smiles, the spring wind grieves,
When budding violets close above thee spread
Their small, heart-shapen leaves,

Pass, O Belovéd, to dreams from slumber deep ;
Recount the store that mellowing time endears,
Thread, through the measureless mazes of thy sleep,
Our old, unchangeful years.

Lie still and listen—while thy sheltering tree
Whispers of suns that rose, of suns that set—
For far-off echoes of the Spring and me.
Dream—do not quite forget.

THE VALLEY OF THE THORN

DOWN a bleak gorge where neighbouring heights divide,
I strayed alone one quiet, autumn day,
Between the long hills stretching far and wide,
Most desolate and grey.

No netted copse, no populous underwood
Made fair that desert pale and tempest-worn,
But solitary in the valley stood
One twisted, wind-scourged thorn.

"Of Death-in-Life the very seal and sign,
Sterility's own self," I said, "is here ;
What desolation can compare with thine ?
What solitude so drear ?

"Flowerless and fruitless, beaten by the blast,
Bereft of every joy ; poor, tortured tree,
Thou art grown old in grief, yet sure, at last,
Death's wind shall solace thee !"

And as I lingered there a while, and dreamed
Dim day-dreams full of idle fantasies,
A low voice answered me—or so it seemed—
A murmur on the breeze.

"Nay," sighed the voice from out the barren thorn,
"Content am I and happy in my lot ;
Fair is my life to me and blithely borne
Here in this quiet spot.

"Oft will the lark sing ; oft the mild west wind
Bring near the solemn soothing of the sea ;
Often the great clouds, white and purple-lined,
Go wandering over me.

“All the long summer, at the twilight hour,
I feel the benediction of the dew ;
I watch the great moon like a golden flower
Grow, in the dusky blue.

“Tho’ never springtide findeth me arrayed
In snow-white glory as my kinsfolk be,
The sheep have sheltered ’neath my scanty shade,
And small birds built in me.

“Once, long ago, how long I do forget,
But many, many a moon of sun and rain,
Two lovers here beneath my branches met,
And vowed to meet again.

“They came no more, but still I think of them
Over and o’er so gay they were and young,
And sigh the name He carved upon my stem,
The snatch of song She sung.

“I feel the shadow of the wild swan’s wings,
I hear the murmur of the heather bees ;
My days are rich with store of pleasant things
And happy memories.”

.
Oft have I searched yon labyrinth forlorn
Of barren slopes and stony gorges hoar,
But that sequestered valley of the thorn,
I found it nevermore.

NEIGES D'ANTAN

MY Doris, bind your loosened hair,
And let those dropping tears be dried ;
Because we found the roses fair
Need we upbraid them that they died ?

What though we watched the white moon rise,
The strong sun spread his golden net ;
Must we then deal in tears and sighs,
Shall we repine because they set ?

Crown me the cup with rose and vine,
Fill—nor forecast to-morrow's need—
To-day is neither yours nor mine,
Though yesterday was ours indeed.

Sigh not, but smile, my very dear,
Nor vex your breast with Why and How ;
For that was There—and this is Here—
For that was Then—and this is Now.

OPEN SESAME

SO low swings the broad, gold moon I could clasp her—
nearly ;

Up to the brow of the down, and an arm's-length merely—
Only a span—yet she mounts, while I pause and wonder,
Chill and remote as the thin white clouds beyond her.

So simple the charmèd word I could almost say it ;
The glimmering dusk, the dew-fall, half betray it ;
Half—yet the silence holds her spell unspoken,
Mute, while the instant fades estranged and broken.

Almost I tread the twilight fields of faery,
Almost I pluck their blossoms frail and airy,
E'en tho' the spoil should turn, home-coming hither,
Armfuls of yellowing leaves and weeds that wither.

Held to the earth's full heart, a moment wholly,
Know we nor fear nor fret, but gladness solely ;
Joy in our part in all—in life's possession,
Joy in the Joy of Life beyond expression.

Joy in the task beloved tho' unavailing,
Joy in the splendid steep too high for scaling ;
Joy in the fleeting glimpse, the vain endeavour,
Tho' Almost meadows flower by the gates of Never.

EPHEMERON

GREY on the daisied grass,
Shadows of moving leaves ;
Happy the brown bees hum,
"Summer has come—has come" ;
Lightly the low winds pass,
Shaking the peony-sheaves.

Tulips the sun looks through
Shining and stately stand ;
Redder than rubies glow
All their great globes arow,
Bright on the summer blue,
Lanthorns of fairy-land.

Ever and aye my own
Still shall this moment be :
I shall remember all—
Shadows and tulips tall,
Scent from the bean-fields blown,
Song of the humble-bee.

.

Lost is that fragrant hour,
Dewy and golden-lit—
Dead—for the memory
Pitiful comes to me
Wan as a withered flower—
Only the ghost of it.

REQUIESCAT

BURY me deep when I am dead,
Far from the woods where sweet birds sing ;
Lap me in sullen stone and lead,
Lest my poor dust should feel the Spring.

Never a flower be near me set,
Nor starry cup nor slender stem,
Anemone nor violet,
Lest my poor dust remember them.

And you—wherever you may fare—
Dearer than birds, or flowers, or dew—
Never, ah me, pass never there,
Lest my poor dust should dream of you.

THE WHITE KNIGHT

(OLD FRENCH. 1600)

GALLANTS, riding to the war,
Riding o'er the lea,
On the battlefield afar
Greet my love for me !

How should we your true-love greet ?
How your true-love know ?
Milk-white is his courser fleet,
White as falling snow.

White the cross upon his breast ;
Golden spurs hath he ;
White upon his lance's crest
Floats a pennon free.

Weep no more, no more, ladye,
Lowly rests his head ;
On the plains of Brittany
Lies your lover dead.

Weep not, ladye, weep no more ;
In a meadow fair
By his grave grey friars four
Speed his soul with prayer.

OUR LADY'S PENITENT

THEY hanged him high on a withered tree
On the wasteland bare and black ;
Pale in the dusk they turned to flee,
And never a soul looked back.

Mute they fled from the place of dread,
But each in his heart made moan :
“ Oh, it's up and away from yon gallows grey
Ere the foul fiend claim his own ! ”

Robber, murderer, beast of prey,
Fell as the were-wolf's race,
None dared stay in the silence grey
To look on that dying face.

None dared bide while the death-gasp died
On the lips foredoomed to hell ;
Yet all the days of his dark life through
Had he loved Our Lady well.

Still from his spoil would he choose the best
Of glittering gold and gem,
To hang in worship across her breast
Or lay at her garment's hem.

And all night long, 'twixt the man and Death,
She hovered in glory there,
And held him up in his living breath
With her long hands slim and fair.

All night long did she hearken—yea,
Till the evil soul was shriven :
She loosed his hands with the dawn of day,
Leaden and stark swung the lifeless clay,
But the ghost fled forth forgiven.

THE WRECKER OF PRIEST'S COVE

ONE yellow rushlight glimmered dim
Among the shadows deep,
Where the dying man lay gaunt and grim,
And his watcher drowsed to sleep.

“Black is the night, and the lamp burns bright
To guide the good ships in ;
There is work, maybe, on the rocks for me,
And a purse of gold to win.

“Now why does he cling so fast, so fast,
To the shore rocks sharp and black ?
Aye has the sea befriended me,
And the sea shall have him back.

“And what should a dead man do with gold
That he grips his belt so tight ?
’Twas all for me through the beating sea
He made yon lusty fight.

“O, the ribbed roof-tree hangs over me
And not the open sky ;
Gone are the rocks and the heavy belt,
And a doting fool am I.

“Now curses on this cankering pain
That will not let me free,
That keeps me back from the worn cliff track
And the harvest of the sea !

“Go, get ye to the window-pane,
And tell me what ye see ;
Is there ever a ship across the bar
Where the merry breakers be ?

“Look out, look out across the bay,
Look out again once more ;
Is it burning bright, our bonny light
That brings the ships inshore ?”

She's ta'en her to the window-pane
And looked across the bay ;
“Oh, the night is chill, and the waves are still
And the wild-fowl boding day.”

“Look out, look out across the bay,
And tell me what ye see ;
A clay cold weight is on my breast
And the dead-thraw grapples me.”

She's ta'en her to the window-pane
To look across the bay,
And thrice her lips gaped wide to speak,
But nothing could she say.

A black cloud filled the window pane
And wrapped the house around,
And out of the gloom came a hollow din,
Like a great ship gone aground.

And out of the gloom came a hollow din
Of a great ship drawing near,
With labouring ropes, and creaking blocks,
And shipmen calling clear.

Slow strained the masts, and the timbers groaned
Like a ship in her agony ;
The chamber was full of the sound of surf
And the clash of a breaking sea.

“Are ye come for me from the foul black sea ?
Win back, ye carrion crew !
Back to the hell where I bade ye dwell,
For never I'll sail with you.”

But the death-gasp rattled in his throat
As he reared him in the bed ;
The room was still as the corpse fell back,
And the murky cloud had sped.

It was a great ship crossed the bar,
With all sail set went she ;
'Gainst tide and wind, with the shore behind,
That ship put out to sea.

THE QUERN OF THE GIANTS

LO, this is the song of a king and his kingly desire,
The story of wrong and undoing—of terror and fire.

Full fair was the store of King Frodi with treasure untold,
And fair were his purple-dyed webs and his platters of gold ;

But strangest and rarest of all were the Quern-stones that lay
Dull and hoar, 'mid the gleam of the gold and the woven
array ;

The mill for the grinding of aught that its conqueror would,
With power for the marring or making—for ill or for good.

Though the strongest and the best of the land put their hands
to the Quern,

Over heavy and great seemed the stones for a mortal to turn :

Till it chanced in the spring of the year that King Frodi
went forth

Over seas to a comrade aforetime, a prince of the north.

Full blithely they met and they greeted, for long was the
space

Since either had parted from other, or looked on his face.

And blithe was the time of their feasting ; much had they to
show,

Spake each of his land and his people—their weal and their
woe.

And Frodi told aye of the Quern-stones. the hoard of his
sire,

How none was so strong as to turn them, for all his desire,

Nor heroes, nor sons of the plough, but forsaken they lay
Dull and hoar, 'mid the gleam of the gold and the woven
array.

And the monarch, his friend of aforetime, smiled, musing,
and said,
“Let the bondwomen, Menia and Frenia, be hitherward led.”

So Menia and Frenia stood forth in the light of the day,
And none of the children of men were so stalwart as they.

So mighty of limb and of stature—no word did they speak,
But their arms were crossed over their bosoms, submissive
and meek.

And sold were the sisters for bond-slaves, and borne oversea
In the brazen-beaked ship of King Frodi, and joyful was he.

And mute 'neath the yoke of the stranger they bowed them
again,
But out of their eyes looked remembrance, and questioning
pain.

They lifted their hands to the Quern—as a task unforgot
Did they bow their proud heads to the grinding and mur-
murèd not.

And Frodi, beholding, laughed out, “Do ye labour, nor cease,
That the land may be glad with your labours—*Grind Gold
and grind Peace.*”

Then patient and strong toiled the sisters, and never were
days
Like those of the Peace of King Frodi for honour and
praise.

Then no man was famished with hunger, nor evil of heart,
And banished was want from the homestead and guile from
the mart.

And sweet was the sound of the grinding as zephyr-stirred
groves,

As the chime of great bells undersea, or the cooing of doves.

And glad was the heart of the people, and green were the
trees,

And fair shone the light of the sun on the blossoming leas ;

And summer-time waned into winter, and still flowed the
gold

Like a river of light o'er the white and the glittering wold.

Still patient and strong toiled the sisters by night and by day,
And none in the length of the land were so weary as they.

Bleak and grey o'er the peace and the plenty, forlorn and
alone

Did they tower in their might and their sorrow ; and Frenia
made moan :

“The wind bloweth cold on our bosoms, the snow and the
sleet

Fall fast on our shelterless heads, and the frost gnaws our
feet ;

“Our eyelids wax heavy with sleep, sore awearied are we ;
Grant us respite, O King, for a while, from our travail for
thee.”

“So long as the pause of a song for the voices that sing,
So long as the call of the cuckoo is silent in spring,

“So long shall ye rest and no longer, so long shall ye cease
From the grinding of pleasure and plenty, of treasure and
peace.”

“There spake not thy wisdom, O King, nor the voice of thy
heart.

Bethink thee, and grant that we rest us a little apart.

“Consider the peace and the plenty, the gold and the grain,
And more treasure yet will we grind when we waken again.”

Full gentle and sad spake the bondwomen mighty of limb,
But the heart of the King was grown gross, and his eyes
waxen dim ;

He saw not their sweat-furrowed brows nor their anguish
untold,
But only the gleam and the glow of the torrent of gold.

“So long as the pause of a song for the voices that sing,
So long as the call of the cuckoo is silent in spring,

“So long shall ye rest and no longer, so long shall ye cease ;
Toil on—grinding gold for my garner—grind gold and grind
peace.”

“*Even so, till the King be content with the thing we shall grind.*”
And murmuring muttered the Quern like the voice of the
wind ;

Dark, dark grew the face of the heavens, and dark grew the
sea,
And a low wind rose up through the gloom, blowing icy and
free.

And Frenia smiled unto Menia : “The Quern is the same
Though the might of our fathers be fled, and forgotten their
name ;

“What thing did we grind for the world in the days over-
past,
In the days when the House of the Giants stood goodly and
vast ?

“Nay, surely ’twas never aforetime the Peace or the Gold
That we ground for the children of men in our homestead
of old ?”

And Menia said : " Now shall we grind till the King be
content

With the fruit of our toil—till the walls of the palace be rent ;

" And the raven shall feast on the hearth, and the wolves
shall make cheer—

Full soon to the wolf and the crow shall King Frodi be dear."

And Frenia said : " Grind we the wrack and the uttermost
woe,

The ruin and rapine, yea—the red right hand of the foe ;

" So—grind we and spare not, come havoc, and fury, and
flame !

Come all, for the fall of King Frodi, his spoiling and shame !

" Let the fire and the sword have their will, aye let slay and
let burn ! "

And hollow and murmuring hoarse rose the voice of the
Quern,

Till it crashed like the shore-driven waves 'neath the hurri-
cane's breath,

Crying, "*Fire, fire and sword to the land, Desolation and Death !*"

" It is coming—O King blind of heart ! dost thou slumber
and sleep,

Even now while black ships of the stranger are breasting the
deep ? "

The red flames brake forth from the earth and her furrows
were rent

With the steel-girdled sons of her might, rising thick as the
bent

Of the wheat-blades in spring ; and the sea roaring up to the
land

On its tide bore the ships of the foeman unhurt o'er the
strand.

And where was the wealth of King Frodi, the Gold and the
Peace?

Ah, where are the leaves that the winter-wind sweeps from
the trees?

And red shone the feet of the maidens, the Quern-stones
were red,
As they ground, dealing death to the living and flame to the
dead;

And still, as they sang, sang the sword and the ravening
fire—

And the heart of King Frodi was emptied of thought or
desire.

Still over the dead and the dying the flames flickered high,
They leapt in the blood-reek, rejoicing, and reddened the
sky,

Till silent at last sank the crying of horror and dule—
“*Lo! Sister, the grinding is over, the garner is full.*”

They ceased, with their arms on their bosoms crossed,
passive and stern,
And hushed was the sound of their song and the voice of the
Quern.

Lo! this is the song of a king and his lust of the gold,
Of a king and his glory gone by as a tale that is told.

THE ISLE OF VOICES

FAIR blows the wind to-day, fresh along the valleys,
Strange with the sounds and the scents of long ago ;
Sinks in the willow-grove, shifts, and sighs, and rallies—
Whence, Wind, and why, Wind, and whither do you go ?

Why, Wind, and whence, Wind ?—Yet well and well I
know it—

Word from a lost world, a world across the sea ;
No compass guides there, never chart will show it—
Green grows the grave there that holds the heart of me.

Sunk lies my ship, and the cruel sea rejoices,
Sharp are the reefs where the hungry breakers fret—
Land so long lost to me !—Youth, the Isle of Voices,
Call never more to me—I who must forget.

AFTER SUNSET

ALL-SOULS DAY

TO-DAY is theirs—the forgotten dead—

For strange and sweet communion set apart,
When the strong, living heart
Beats in the dissolute dust, the darkened bed,
Rebuilds the form beloved, the vanished face,
Relights the blown-out lamps o' the faded eyes,
Touches the clay-bound lips to tenderest speech,
Saying, "Awake—arise!"

To-day the warm hands of the living reach
To chafe the cold hands of the long-loved dead ;
Once more the lonely head
Leans on a living breast, and feels the rain
Of falling tears, and listens yet again
To the dear voice—the voice that never in vain
Could sound the old behest.

Each seeks his own to-day ;—but, ah, not I—I enter not
That sacred shrine beneath the solemn sky ;
I claim no commerce with the unforget.

My thoughts and prayers must be
Even where mine own fixed lot hereafter lies,
With that great company
For whom no wandering breeze of memory sighs
Through the dim prisons of imperial Death :
They in the black, unfathomed oubliette
For ever and ever set—
They, the poor dead whom none remembereth.

THE SONG OF SONGS

THE dawn-wind sighs through the trees, and a blackbird,
waking,
Sings in a dream to me of dreams and the dying Spring,
Calls from the darkened heart of the wood over light leaves
shaking,
Calls from deep hollows of night where the grey dew
cling.

Soul of the dawn! Dear voice, O fount pellucid and golden!
Triumph and hope and despair meet in your magical flow;
Better than all things seen, and best of the unbeholden,
Song of the strange things known that we shall not know.

Yours not the silent months, the splendid burden of Summer,
Dark with the pomp of leaves and heavy with flowers full
blown,
Spring and the Dawn are your kingdoms, O Spring's first-
comer,
Lordship and largesse of Youth, they are all your own.

Song of songs, and joy of joys, and sorrow of sorrows,
Now in a distant forest of dream, and now in mine ear,
Who would take thought of eld, or the shadow of songless
morrrows,
Who would say "Youth is past," while you keep faith
with the year?

LES FOINS

THEY are mowing the meadows now, and the whispering,
sighing

Song of the scythe breathes sweet on mine idle ear,—
Songs of old Summers dead, and of this one dying,—
Roses on roses fallen, and year on year ;

Softly as swathes that sink while the long scythe, swinging,
Passes and pauses and sweeps through the deep green grass :
Strange how this song of the scythe sets the old days singing—
Echoes of seasons gone, and of these that pass.

Fair ghost of Youth—from your sea-fragrant orchard-closes
Called by the voice of the scythe as it sighs and swings—
Tell to me now as you toss me your phantom roses,
What was the dream you dreamed through those vagrant
Springs ?

What that forgotten air when the heart went maying ?
What was the perfume blowing afar, anear ?

.

“ Youth—Youth—Youth ”—the Scythe keeps sighing and
saying—

“ The rose you saw not—the tune that you could not
hear.”

THE PILGRIM

WHERE is the haunt of Peace,
The place of all release—
Tell me, O Wind—the House of sweet repose?

“Night’s dusky tent is spread
For tired heart and head,
And very fragrant is Night’s orchard-close.”

What of the soundless deep,
Those shining plains of Sleep
Whence the adventurer returns no more?

“Sleep is a golden sea,
With billows great and free,
But still they bear the swimmer back to shore.”

Nay, tell me farther yet,
Where no swift waters fret,
Where rose and violet
Engarland not, nor ever blooms the May—
Tell me, O Wind, for you must know the way.

“Death’s black pavilion stands
In the Unshapen Lands,
And in Death’s garden all the flowers are grey.”

NIGHT-PIECE

THE moon between the deodars,
The rising moon, benign and bright,
Came with her train of shining stars
And looked on me to-night.

Beneath the high, the dusky boughs,
Her golden face bent fair and mild,
Even as it were my Mother's house,
And I once more her child.

WANDERLIED

THE blackbird charmed me from my quiet chamber,
As in a dream I heard his sweet voice calling ;
The garden plots were paved with pearl and amber,
And all about the walks white petals falling.

Close hid within the misty green-veiled thicket,
That strange voice drew my heart beyond believing,
And as I leaned across the orchard wicket
I knew not was it glad or was it grieving.

But this I knew . . . 'twas to no earthly meadows
He called me hence from out his dim wood's hollow,
He bade me to the Place of Dreams and Shadows,
And one day he will call and I shall follow.

"PER DOMOS DITIS VACUAS"

T. V. R.

THE old, old Wind that whispers to old trees,
Round the dark country when the sun has set,
Goes murmuring still of unremembered seas
And cities of the dead that men forget—
An old blind beggar-man, distained and grey,
With ancient tales to tell,
Mumbling of this and that upon his way,
Strange song and muttered spell—
Neither to East or West, or South or North,
His habitation lies,
This roofless vagabond who wanders forth
Aye under alien skies—
A gypsy of the air, he comes and goes
Between the tall trees and the shadowed grass,
And what he tells only the twilight knows . . .
The tall trees and the twilight hear him pass.

To him the Dead stretch forth their strengthless hands,
He who campaigns in other climes than this,
He who is free of the Unshapen Lands,
The empty homes of Dis.

NEIGES D'ANTAN

TO R. A. M. S.

SUNLIGHT, and birds, and blossom on the trees—
What, O my heart, is wanting more than these?
What shall content if these may not avail? . . .
Once on a time 'twas joy enough to lie
Beneath the young leaves and the limpid sky,
A spell-bound traveller in a fairy-tale.

.

Oh! nevermore for us the Palace of Spring,
No more those haunted chambers echoing
Sweet, sweet, and hollow, to the cuckoo's song;
Filled with a mellow lustre all day long,
And lit by golden lamps at evening.
No more the enchanted woods—their purple haze
Enveils them yet—but closed are all the ways—
The elfin meadows glimmer, deep in dew,
Misty with flowers—but we have lost the clue;
There is no path into the magic maze.

.

These were youth's emissaries, every one,
The darting birds between the orchard snows. . . .
'Twas Youth that blossomed lovelier than the rose,
And Youth that fluted in the blackbird's throat,
And Youth that steered the sun's great golden boat,
The westering golden galley of the sun.

Youth comes no more for ever—even although
The fields takes flower again, and lilacs blow,
And pointed leaf-buds gather on the vine:
Even although the sun should sail and shine
Bright as of old, and all the thickets rang—
That sun is set, and mute the spirit that sang.

GOD'S ACRE

ALMOST I thought I heard the sheep-bells ringing
In rippling rhythms, limpid and serene ;
Almost I thought I heard my blackbird singing
Deep in the garden where the leaves are green.

Almost I dreamed you stood to watch me sleeping,
Lingered a moment with your hand on mine ;
Almost I dreamed you leaned above me weeping,
And felt your tears fall on me for a sign.

Almost it seemed I felt the fresh wind blowing
Loose little petals from the lindens shed :
Oh, while the sunlight warms the deep grass growing,
How should I not forget that I am dead ?

Could I forget the summer-time, the haying,
Here in the graveyard, where you think I rest,
With sharp scythes sounding, with the tall grass laying
In sweet long swathes on my unquiet breast ?

ABSCHIED

THE mountain tops are wrapped in rain,
And all the ling's fine amethyst
Is drowned in drifts of white, white mist . . .
Our hour is come to part again.

By the pale window waves the pine
Its measured farewells, grave and slow ;
Silently as the falling snow
Floats the gold leafage of the vine.

O, very lonely is my way,
More lonely than your dwelling here ;
Which is the sharper grief, My Dear,
For me to go ? . . . for you to stay ?

That you must stay . . . that I must go.
O vast estrangement bleak and new ;
Whatever the years may bring to you
I shall not heed, I shall not know.

For the high hill-tops shall touch the plain,
Sun, moon, and stars be overthrown,
And the salt seas be turned to stone
Before we two may meet again.

NOCTURN

THE air is dark and sweet
This wet Spring night—
Spring, of the wandering feet,
The secret flight,
Calls through the slow, soft rain—
O voice of gold !
Calls to me once again,
As oft of old.

The darkness sighs and stirs,
Blind, blind and slow ;
Night-wandering loiterers,
The veiled airs go ;
Mutes of the viewless spell,
The hidden power,
These—but my heart knows well
Its magic hour . . .

My heart's one festival,
O, far or near,
The Spring could never call
And I not hear :
Deep under graveyard grass,
It could not be,
The Spring could never pass
And I not see . . .

My heart, my heart would break
Could it be so—
To think that Spring should wake
And I not know,

THE MAGIC LANTHORN

ILLUSION is the lamp that memory burns ;
Still on the faded pageant of the past,
Set with gay slides the painted lanthorn turns
With jewelled lights and changing colours cast—
The shadows shift, the lustres wax and wane
As the dim scene grows blurred or bright again.

Strange seasons rise, strange forests flower and fade,
Between the boles, along the dusky grass,
Threading the ancient marble colonnade
Rich-vestured shapes with eyes averted pass—
Or the long rays illumine autumn leas
With quiet waters and with golden trees.

As sunset spreads and furls its golden wings,
That radiance glows and pales on hollow and hill,
And the veiled ghosts that go like living things . . .
Still moves the wizard-litten masque—and still
Th' enchanted woods, the haunted meadows gleam
Faint as the storied arras of a dream,

GLORIA MUNDI

DAWN moves abroad in the air, but the gold moon
sailing

High in the West, is full and refulgent yet ;
Tall trees tower to the blue that is fading, failing,
Dim in the deeps where the sunken stars have set.

There is no sun yet—the leaves stir in their sleep and shiver,
Dreaming, perchance, of frost and the solemn fall :
Grey as an old glass stretches the lonely river,
Pale as the stones in the crumbling cloister wall.

How was the miracle wrought, and from whence unfolden ?
Draws it the night's last sigh—or the day's first breath ?
Close, or beginning, that shines where the dawn grows
golden—

Here is the glory of earth—Is it Birth or Death ?

SPRING SONG

To M. M. S.

THE boughs are heavy with blossom,
The grass grows deep on the lawn—
Sweeter and ever sweeter
The blackbird pipes to the dawn.

The paths lie pale in the twilight,
As pale as a ring-dove's breast ;
The birchwood is blue and silver—
A faint rose fades in the west.

.

O, air of the April gloaming,
O, wind of the linnet's wing—
There is little else to be glad for,
But my heart is glad of the Spring.

ZIGEUNERLIED

THE rain is gone, but the leaves are wet,
The long spathe swells where the buds are set ;
Summer shall wear what the Springtide weaves
In her green, green bower of leaves.

Dim are the stars though the moon rose bright ;
My chamber is full of the sweet Spring night,
The dark Spring night and its scented gloom—
Blue dusk and the lilac-bloom.

The heart of youth and the House of Dream,
They are here once more while the Spring stars gleam ;
The palace-towers of the Eastern tale
Fell not till the dawn grew pale.

See how their casement, amber-bright,
Hangs in the wall of the dark Spring night :
The gypsy halts by the lighted pane
And then—to the road again.

THE GOLDEN TOUCH

THE amber dust of sunset fills
The limits of my narrow room,
And every sterile shadow thrills
To golden hope, to golden bloom.

Sweet through the splendour, shrill and sweet
Somewhere a neighbouring cage-bird sings,
Sings of the Spring in this grey street
While golden glories gild his wings.

Clothed with the sun he breaks to song—
In vague remembrance, deep delight—
Of dim green worlds, forsaken long,
Of leaf-hung dawn and dewy night.

My prisoning bars, transfigured too,
Fade with the day, forsworn, forgot—
Melt in a golden mist—and you
Are here, although you know it not.

SERENADE

WHO is it sings the gypsies' song to-night
To muted strings,
Deep in the linden shade, beyond the light
My casement flings ?

Can it be Death who sings ? Ah no, not he,
For he is old,—
His voice is like the murmur of the sea
When light grows cold.

Who is it sings once more, once more again
The gypsy song ?—
Song of the open road, the starry plain
Estranged so long :—

“ Come to the woods, come, for the woods are green,
The sweet airs blow,
The hawthorn boughs the forest boles between
Are white as snow.” . . .

The wet leaves stir ; the dim trees dream again
Of vanished Springs :—
Out in the night, out in the slow, soft rain,
My lost youth sings.

AUBADE

To H. L. S.

SO late last night I watched with you, and yet
You come to wake me while the dews are grey,
Before the sun is forth upon his way,
Almost as though you feared I might forget.

And still you count, unmoved, importunate,
Each pitiful item in my sorrow's freight—
As lovers all their vows before they part
Over and over recapitulate—
Though well you know I have it all by heart.

O Grief, this little while forbear, refrain
Telling your beads so loud, so soon, again.
Tuning your summons to the blackbird's song.
Here, where the dawn hangs dark in lawn and tree,
Do but a little longer wait for me,
I, who am mindful of you all day long.

D'OUTRE TOMBE

BESIDE my grave, if chance should ever bring you,
You, peradventure, on some dim Spring day,
What song of welcome could my blackbird sing you,
As once in May?

As once in May, when all the birds were calling,
Calling and crying through the soft Spring rain,
As once in Autumn with the dead leaves falling
In wood and lane.

I, in my grave, and you, above, remember—
And yet between us what is there to say?—
In Death's disseverance, wider than December
Disparts from May.

I with the dead, and you among the living,
In separate camps we sojourn, unallied;
Life is unkind and Death is unforgiving,
And both divide.

OASIS

FAR spreads the desert before and the waste behind us,
Grey and adust—but here the forest is green,
Here not the irons of eld nor of Winter bind us,
Neither the grief of the known nor the unforeseen.

Faintly the south wind stirs, with the woods awaking,
Softly the kind sun shines like a golden flower,
Wake, O my heart, and remember . . . the buds are
breaking :
Rest, O my heart, and forget . . . 'tis the magic hour.

Joy comes once more ; once more through the wet leaves
swinging
Vistas of silver and blue in the birch-woods gleam ;
In the dusk of the cold spring dawn with a blackbird
singing—
Singing the Song of Songs by the Gates of Dream.

DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE

A THRUSH is singing on the walnut tree—
The leafless walnut-tree with silver boughs,
He sings old dreams long distant back to me—
He sings me back to childhood's happy house.

O to be you, triumphant Voice-of-Gold,
Red rose of song above the empty bowers,
Turning the faded leaves, the hopes grown cold,
To Springtide's good green world of growing flowers :

Might the great change that turns the old to new
Remould this clay to better blossoming,
I would be you, Great-Heart, I would be you,
And sing like you of Love and Death and Spring.

THE WHITE WAY

To H. C. M. W.

THE white way winds across the hill,
The long hill-road, too high to climb,
White with the dust in Summer still,
And white with snow in Winter-time.

To no rich house it leads, nor yet
To farm or fold or any town,
But grassy banks its bounds beset
And wandering lights flit up and down.

The great cloud-shadows gleam and go,
And sunset sweeps with golden wings
Those airy parapets where grow
The sainted stars, like living things.

My steps have never sought the bourne,
That lofty limit cold and white,
Yet I may hear, some misty morn,
A clear voice calling from the height.

Then, when the lost word comes to mind,
And the dim path lies plain to me,
Full well I know what I shall find
Between the daybreak and the wind—
A green grave and a Calvary.

A RUINED ALTAR

"The hare shall kittle on thy cold hearth-stane."

—THOMAS THE RHYMER.

GREEN is the valley, and fair the slopes around it,
Wide waves of barley shining to the sun ;
Softly the stock-doves murmur in the pine trees,
Deep through the hollow the happy waters run.

Roofless and ruinous lies the little homestead,
All the grey walls of it crumbling to the ground ;
Only the hearth-place, steadfast and unshaken,
Stands, like a tomb, 'mid the lusty leafage round.

Foxglove and hemlock blossom in the garden,
Where the bright ragwort tramples on the rose ;
Gone is the gate, and lost the little pathway,—
High on the threshold the gaunt nettle grows.

Here, long ago, were toil, and thought, and laughter,
Poor schemes for pleasures, piteous plans for gain,
Love, fear, and strife—for men were born and died here—
Strange human passion, bitter human pain.

Now the square hearth-place, shrouded deep in shadow,
Holds in its hollow wild things of the wood ;
Here comes the hawk, and here the vagrant swallow
Nests in the niche where cup and trencher stood.

Shy furry forms, that hide in brake and covert,
Leap on the stone where leapt the yellow flame ;
Up the wide chimney, black with vanished smoke-wreaths,
Clambers the weed that wreathes the mantel-frame.

But when cometh Winter and all the weeds are withered
In these bare chambers open to the rain,
Then, when the wind moans in the broken chimney,
And the hare shivers in the sodden lane,

Then the old hearth-nook mourns the folk that filled it,
Mourns for the cheer of the red and golden blaze ;
Heaped with the snow-drifts, standing bleak and lonely,
Dreams of the dead and their long-forgotten days.

CHANSON BRETON

(AFTER ALBERT DELPIT)

ALAS, my love is far away,
And there is naught can comfort me. . . .
A gallant wooed me yesterday
Beneath the shady greenwood tree.
"Fair sir," I said, "thy vows are vain,
This heart is wrung with heavy pain,
And he I love. . . . Thou art not He."

With gauds of jewels and of gold,
And robes of pearl and silver thread,
Came a great lord who would me wed,
And give me all his heart to hold.
And then came Death. . . . O Sweet and Fair!
Stretch forth thine arms and clasp me there. . . .
Dear Death, do thou my body bear
There where my love is lying cold!
Only thy breast should stay her head
Who never may be comforted.

THE FORLORN HOPE

THE laughing children, busy at their play,
Still build in blithe defiance of the sea—

Here shall the moat and here the fortress be,
With battlemented ramparts brave and gay—
Coming and going in the sandy bay ;

Eager they toil, nor wholly think to see
The landward-turning breakers, flowing free,
Sweep all their faëry castle-courts away.

Not long the sea of pain forsakes the shore,
And still we build our swift-beleagured town,
Still the frail walls with tottering turrets crown,
Still the poor sand-built citadel restore,—
Sweeping our pitiful defences down,
The pitiless tide reclaims us evermore.

"EINST, O WUNDER!"

HERE in the sun the thrushes sing ;
Here in the sun the tulips shine ;
White clouds wander and wet leaves swing—
Where is the shadow of Winter's wing,
And where this sorrow of yours and mine ?

The long, long years and the twilight way
Close in a mist of the sun's own gold ;
Youth is lord of the world to-day—
Only the early dews are grey ;
Only the last year's leaves are old.

With youth's wild heart and with youth's wet eyes
We wait once more what the hour may bring,
Young once more with the woods and skies,
Rich with the sun's gold—rich and wise—
O wind that blows from Paradise !
O strange soft-whispering Wind of Spring.

D'OUTREMER

To H.

LEAN from your window when the dim stars fade,
When the grey dawn-wind stirs your poplar tree ;
Look eastward, dear,—O do not be afraid
Thus, once, to watch for me.

My shallow grave is very far away,
Where the great plains lie barren oversea,
But I would meet you at the door of day,
Did you but call to me.

Call to me once, but once, and I shall hear,
As your heart bids you call—or silent be—
And if 'tis silence, then so best, my dear :
All will be well with me.

MEMINISSE JUVABIT

THE deep sea shines, unbearable in glory,
The green wood beckons, luminously dense,
Yet both will fade as a forgotten story
When we go hence.

We shall fare forth no more into the meadows,
The low, salt valleys of the water-plain,
Among the shallow early-morning shadows—
No more again.

Here, in the oak-wood with the young trees flinging
Slim silver boughs athwart a purple sea,
The chill, sweet ripple of a robin singing
To you and me.

Although the hour has come—our hour is over—
Surely there seems some solace yet to know
In twilight time when Memory turns rover
Across the snow.

It may be it shall please you to remember
These silver stems, this shadowy woodland way,
To think upon one sun-perfumed September—
Perchance—some day.

In your late gloaming when the ghosts are thronging,
When daylight fails, and clouds hang low and grey,
You may look back with wonder and with longing
Perchance—some day.

ARMISTICE

FROM the broad summit of the furrowed wold
The oxen, resting, gaze with quiet eyes—
Through the swart shining hide's obscurities
Shows, sharply hewn, the gaunt frame's massive mould,
Wide spread the horns in branching outlines bold—
Solemn they stand beneath the brooding skies,
Impassive, grave, as guardian deities
Carved on some stone sarcophagus of old.

Proud 'neath the yoke bends every stately head ;
What tho' the burden drag, the goad-sting gall,
Rest is Earth's recompense for each and all,
Ours, as for these mute thralls of trailing tread,
Emblems of labour immemorial,
The dignity of toil incarnated.

BIRD OF PARADISE

THROUGH the wood, through the wood, sweet and
shrill and clear,
Round the hill, down the vale, still the music rings,
Now piping far away, fluting now anear—
'Tis the robin sings.

One that was, years ago, hearkened to a song,
Deep in a sunny wood listened all alone,
Listened the space of a Summer morning long,
Ere he turned home again half his days were flown.

Bird of the tawny breast, bird of crystal tongue,
You have your magic too, to charm the years away—
How they shine forth again, days when all was young,
Here in the hazel-wood while you sing to-day. . . .

How they come back again, happy days and dear,
Hope of youth, heart of youth, unremembered Springs—
O, for a little moment Spring is here
While the robin sings.

THE HOUSE DESOLATE

SO still the old house lies, so dull, so grey,
The dews of dawn forget to hallow it ;
Here come no sweet birds singing, night or day,
By these bare eaves no building swallows flit.

Sunk in dim dreams it lies as in a swoon—
Dreams of a distant city hid from sight,
The enchanted city of the sun and moon,
The golden market of the world's delight.

Pale as the dead are they that dwell herein,
Worn with vain strife and wrung with vain regret ;
Theirs but to watch the world go by to win
That glimmering goal their hearts remember yet.

They lean among the lilacs by the door,
To watch the winding road with wistful eyes,
The long, white dusty way that nevermore
Shall bear them hope, or wonder, or surprise.

Sometimes they call, but answer comes there none ;
Sometimes they beckon—none will turn aside.
The long procession glitters in the sun ;
With echoing tramp the motley pilgrims ride.

Some in the twilight chambers, wide and low,
Around a cold hearth gather, murmuring
Vague, half-remembered tales of long ago,
Songs, half forgot, of Travel and the Spring.

Wan faces peer from the uncurtained pane,
Across the weedy garden, fain to see
The wayfarers that pass in sun or rain,
The blue, far-shining stream that threads the lea.

.

Here falls no sign from any passer-by,
None lifts the latch of this forgotten gate ;
Only faint winds about the lintel sigh,
“Your House is left unto you desolate.”

THE WHITE BIRD

"Zigeunerkind hat keiner Ruh."

THE wild bird 'bode in the tame bird's tether,
The stray white bird with the broken wing,
And the quick, bright eyes like a hunted thing—
'Twas here, where the roofs crowd close together,
He came one day in a stormy Spring.

Flung by a freak of the west wind hither,
'Tis well, said we, with our vagrant guest,
The white wild bird in the tame bird's nest,
No more the sport of the whence and whither,
But calm kind fortunes of ease and rest.

Here in the fine town fenced and tended,
Sheltered and safe from day to day,
Went never a wandering thought astray?
Did he dream, perchance, of the old life ended,
The wide world's joy and the wide world's way?

The low sun's fire and the long low shadows
On outland valleys; and oh, once more
Thunder of surf on the sounding shore,
The grey sea-marshes, the wide sea-meadows,
Wind-bent boughs of the sycamore?

The wild bird came and the wild bird tarried,
In a green courtyard guarded well—
The first buds broke and the last leaves fell—
What was the summons the storm-wind carried,
And what the sign of the broken spell?

Oh, the word of the wind and the winged white weather!
The swift shrill call of the whirling blast,
And the bond is snapped and the sojourn past—
At the sight, at the touch of a white snow-feather
The wanderer's child goes free at last.

CHILDREN OF THE MIST

THE cold airs from the river creep
About the murky town,
The spectral willows, half asleep,
Trail their thin tresses down
Where the dim tide goes wandering slow,
Sad with perpetual ebb and flow.

The great blind river, cold and wide,
Goes groping by the shore,
And still where water and land divide
He murmurs evermore
The overword of an old song,
The echo of an ancient wrong.

There is no sound 'twixt stream and sky,
But white mists walk the strand,
Waifs of the night that wander by,
Wraiths from the river-land—
While here, beneath the dripping trees,
Stray other souls more lost than these.

Voiceless and visionless they fare,
Known all too well to me—
Ghosts of the years that never were,
The years that could not be—
And still, beneath the eternal skies
The old blind river gropes and sighs.

SPRING, THE STRANGER

'TIS Spring, and yet the east wind blows
In eddies down the dusty lane,
Nor leaf nor bud the orchard shows
While palm and primrose wax and wane.

Clear shine the days, so hard, so bright
With stony lustre shining still
On meadows gay in gold and white,
And glittering waters flowing chill.

Was it for this the Winter went,
Was it for this in wistful wise
We waited, sure and well content,
This changeling with the vacant eyes?

The sunlit sky stares bleak and blue,
High with a pomp of pale clouds piled,
Sure never thus the Spring we knew,
In bygone seasons wept and smiled.

This is the Spring—but O, for those
With youth's own fragrance sweet and vain,
Lost Springs that blossomed like the rose,
Dead Springs that cannot rise again.

DE PROFUNDIS

THROUGH the melancholy Winter sunset
 Pale with shores of pearl and seas of amber,
 High in air above the silent garden,
 Floats a song of sweet, of strange denial,
 Clear and mellow, insolent with triumph,
 Though the snow-wind sighs about the branches
 Of the bare trees
 Stark in dank and dripping desolation,
 In this graveyard that was once a garden
 Rich with sun and redolent with plenty—
 Once?—ah never—Nay, but look, but listen.

Joy of joys! a blackbird in the cedar,
 Flings a golden gauntlet of defiance,
 Gallant and gay.
 Dares the Winter to his worst endeavour—
 And the boughs once more
 Rustle thick with leaves and jewelled fruitage;
 Loose-leaved roses blossom by the fountain
 In the perfumed dusk:
 See, the skies are hung with Summer purple,
 Summer stars and dew.

Dear, with us, too,
 So it shall be, though the grey years darken;
 Though a wintry world lie waste around us,
 Thus it shall be, and the cold close find us
 Neither old, nor sad, nor hope-forsaken;
 Here the Spring shall linger quick and fragrant,
 Here the full heart still shall sing of Summer.

IN MEMORIAM R. A. M. S.

YOU are not here, and yet it is the Spring—
The tide you loved, compact of sun and rain,
And all sweet life and colour wakening,
Losing your touch the world falls grey again.

With you we strayed through faëry palaces,
Threaded green forests dark with ancient trees,
Solemn with pomp of immemorial shade,
Where by still pools the wood-nymphs bathed and played :
Unconscious as a happy child at play,
Of all forgotten splendours you were free,
And all the present wealth of night and day—
O, you, and you alone, could lead the way,
Yours was the key.

Yours was the golden touch, O loved and lost,
Or ever the wintry years that bring the frost
Could blur your radiant spirit, you are fled.
Eld shall not make a mock of that dear head,
Nor Time account you with his tempest-tost.
Young with imperishable youth you sped :
Yours is the peace, ours the unnumbered cost.

THE COUP DE GRÂCE

PAIN and the Years press hard upon our track,
Sleuth-hounds of Time and his grey huntsman, Death ;
And now we hide—and now would double back—
And now we stand and halt awhile for breath.

Most green and goodly is the hunting-ground,
With pleasant shade and golden glints of sun,
Yet still we hear the baying of the hound,
Or far, or near, until the chase be done.

The gaunt grey Huntsman stalks behind the trees
Until the labouring heart is spent and broke,
Till the doomed quarry stumbles to its knees
And he may stoop to deal the mercy-stroke.

KITCHENER OF KHARTOUM

(JUNE 4TH, 1902)

STRONG, swift, and silent, in your iron might,
Steadfast you wrought, forging day from chaos and night,
Purging the land of strife and blunder and wrong—
You—direct and keen as an arrow's flight—
You—remote as the hills from the babbling throng :
How should you care for laurel-garland or song ?
You, the Lord of the Sword, silent and swift and strong.

GENERAL VISCOUNT KITCHENER

(JULY 12TH, 1902)

“And, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.”

LONG, long ago a strong man fought a lion,
Wrestled bare-handed in his own stark might,
Steadfast of eye and limb and grip of iron—
So he prevailed and conquered in the fight :
And in a little while from out the strife
Was sweetness born and promise of new life.

Out of the Strong the Sweet—O you who wrought it,
How shall we praise you, brave, and kind, and fleet ?
The good fight done, shall we not say who fought it,
Who from the War's dark lees wrung out the Sweet ?

Gladly we speak your name, proudly we praise you,
You whose renown shall know no mortal lease ;
Fame has no more to say, no height to raise you,
Lord of the Sword—but also Lord of Peace.

"WHERE NEITHER MOTH NOR RUST
DOTH CORRUPT"

IF, peradventure, in the years to be
You come, O Child, to narrower needs of me
As the world widens to you—even although
Life touch you with indifference as you go—
No longer hand in hand and heart to heart,
Should we be borne apart,
Thrust far asunder in the hurrying press,
Even so I shall not fare companionless.
I 'mid the last late loiterers wandering slow,
With wearied, equable pace,
The solace of the sunset on my face—
The sunset spacious and low—
With tired feet in the dew,
Lifting mine eyes where you
Far in the forefront of the pageant ride,
Mailed in the splendours of your strength and pride.
You—yet another you
Yourself as verily—leans his cheek to mine,
Lilts inarticulate eloquence divine
With babbling call and coo. . . .

The small down-vestured head,
Golden and faint,
Pale as the aureole of a child saint,
Dear as a tender thought of one long dead ;
The innocent eyes ; the sweet
Impetuous little feet ;—
These, though the world went mourning for your sake,
Not the sheer tomb could take. . . .
The sweet eyes plead ; the fluttering hands implore ;

The frail arms cling as fondly as before
The strange years worked their will.

Child of my heart, though change and time divide
Me and your later semblance, you abide.
However time may devastate or fulfil,
Safe, incorruptible, shall my treasure hide ;
Borne on my breast, light-pattering at my side,
The fair ghost linger still.

ALLERSEELEN

STREW violets about the floor,
And scour the brazen platters bright ;
For one who aye was here before
Will come once more again to-night.

Draw the tall settle to the fire,
And stir the sunken logs to glow ;
Hang the horn-lanthorn by the byre,
And sweep away the sprinkling snow.

Set the old playthings in their place—
The china lamb, the wooden sword,
The chessmen in the painted case,
The bugle with the scarlet cord,

The plate with clustered rosebuds gay,
The little cup all gold and white—
Reach down his ringdove's cage, and lay
The frozen swallow out of sight.

So far to come, so far to go—
So cold, so black this midnight is—
So light the footsteps sound and low ;
We shall not hear the sound of his.

Set wider still the open door ;
Sweep yet again the snow, the sleet ;
Bring out the white, warm cloak he wore,
White furs to wrap his little feet. . . .

O do not stir, . . . O do not speak, . . .
Be still, with never sound or sign !
Let me but feel the cool, soft cheek
Pressed once again to mine,

A CHILD'S GARDEN

THE garden wastes : the little child is grown ;
Rank with high weeds and blossoms overblown,
His tiny territory boasts no more
The dainty many-coloured mien it wore
In the old time,
When the stout toiler of the summer's prime
Wrought in his glory, sun-flushed and bemired,
With spade and water-can, nor ever tired,
Yet found the bedward stair so steep to climb.

Pink and forget-me-not and mignonette,
Red double daisies accurately set,
We had them all by heart and more beside,
Purple and yellow pansies, solemn-eyed
As little owlets in their tufted bowers. . . .
The weeds have come and driven forth the flowers.
Summer with all her roses onward hastes.
The garden wastes—
This poor small garden, sweet in summers known.
The garden wastes : the little child is grown.

How good those summers, gay and golden-lit,
When down the walks the white-froaked form would flit,
Laden and all-triumphant with its load ;
That narrow pleasaunce, and the spoils of it !
The various spoils of it so proudly shown,
So royally bestowed. . . .
Green wrinkled cress and rosy radish node,
The unsunned strawberry's dimly coral cone,—
There be none such treasures now : the child is grown.

The fish-tailed merchild carved in crumbling stone
Wreathed with loose straggling roses, reigns alone,

Th' abandoned idol still smiles gravely on.
The other child is gone.
New play, new paths, the old sweet hours disown ;
Poor graven image on your rain-worn throne
Smiling the foolish smile,
Rose petals fall around you yet awhile,
Nor may I mourn this little plot defaced,
The bare nest whence the fledgling bird has flown,
His garden-waste :
The little child is grown.

THE WHITE LADY

THE white stone lady on the grass
Beneath the walnut tree,
She never smiles to see me pass,
Or blows a kiss to me.

She holds a cup in both her hands
With doves upon its brink,
And ho, so very still she stands
The thrushes come to drink.

She will not listen when I speak,
She never seemed to know,
When once I climbed to kiss her cheek
And brush away the snow.

She never took the daisy ring
I gave her yesterday ;
She never cares to hear me sing,
Or watch me at my play.

But, still she looks through sun or rain,
Towards the garden door,
As though some child should come again
Who often came before.

Some little child who went away,
Before they knew of me,
Another child who used to play
Beneath the walnut tree.

THE CHILD ALONE

THEY say the night has fallen chill—
But I know naught of mist or rain,
Only of two small hands that still
Beat on the darkness all in vain.

They say the wind blows high and wild
Down the long valleys to the sea ;
But I can only hear the child,
Who weeps in darkness, wanting me.

Beyond the footfalls in the street,
Above the voices of the bay,
I hear the sound of little feet,
Two little stumbling feet astray.

Oh, loud the Autumn wind makes moan,
The desolate wind about my door,
And a little child goes all alone
Who never was alone before.

THE OPEN DOOR

O LISTEN for her step when the fire burns hollow,
When the low flame whispers and the white ash sinks,
When all about the chamber shadows troop and follow
As drowsier yet the hearth's red watchlight blinks.

While bare black night through empty casements staring
Waits to storm the wainscot till the fire lies dead,
Fast along the snow-bound waste little feet are faring—
Hush—and listen—listen—but never turn your head.

Leave the door upon the latch—she could never reach it—
You would hear her crying, crying there till break of day,
Out on the cold moor 'mid the snows that bleach it,
Weeping as once in the long years past away.

Lean deeper in the settle-corner lest she find you—
Find and grow fearsome, too afraid to stay :
Do you hear the hinge of the oaken press behind you ?
There all her toys were kept, there she used to play.

Do you hear the light, light foot, the faint sweet laughter ?
Happy stir and murmur of a child that plays :
Slowly the darkness creeps up from floor to rafter
Slowly the falling snow covers all the ways.

Falls as it fell once on a tide past over.
Golden the hearth glowed then, bright the windows shone ;
And still, still she comes through the sullen drifts above her
Home to the cold hearth though all the lights are gone.

Far or near no one knew—none would now remember—
Where she wandered no one knew, none will ever know ;
Somewhere, Spring must give her flowers, somewhere white
December
Call her from the moorland to her playthings through the
snow,

NOCTURN

OUTSIDE his nursery window
A tall green pine-tree stands,
And every night it beckons
And waves its shadowy hands :
Whether the breeze flies lightly,
Or whether the winds blow wild,
It's "Good night to you now, O Pine-tree,"
"Good night to you, little Child."

The bright moon looks through its branches,
The thin moon splendid and new ;
It spreads a snare for the dewdrops,
And stars hang sparkling through :
But moonlight, and starlight, and sunlight,
The great winged winds and the breeze,—
With the little child to wave to,
What should it care for these ?

When in the lonely midnight,
Awake with the storm and rain,
He opens the chink in the curtain,
To peer through the window-pane,
He can hear the pine-tree saying—
Over and over, too—
"The night is wet and windy,
But I'm staying awake with you."

Every night at bedtime
A small hand waves to the tree,
A small face smiles through the twilight,
Pressing the pane to see ;
And whether the breeze flies lightly,
Or whether the winds blow wild,
It's "Good night to you now, O Pine-tree"—
"Good night to you, little Child."

AN OUTLAND VOYAGE

THE tall ships come and the tall ships go
Across the purple bay ;
But there's never a ship so fair and fine,
Never a ship so brave as mine,
As mine that sailed away.

Bright in the light and grey in the shade,
And white when the waves grow dun,
The gulls go by with their great wings spread :
But the sails of my ship were gold and red,
And they shone like the setting sun.

They make good cheer in the tavern here,
The sailors home from sea ;
But the crew of my ship they feast with kings,
In emerald crowns and opal rings,
And coats of the cramoisie.

Fine is the freight their ships bring in,
But mine bears finer far—
Pearls and roses, and links of gold,
Myrrh and amber, and rich bales rolled,
As bright as the morning star.

'Twas May-day morn that my ship set sail,
With the dew on her figure-head—
Her bows were wreathed with the hawthorn bloom,
As she stole through the dusk of the dawning gloom
Like a ghost, or a bride new wed.

The May-days dawn and the May-days die,
And the hour draws near, I know ;
The day when my ship shall come for me
To carry me back to mine own countrie,
East of the sun, by the outmost sea,
In the heart of the Long Ago.

THE GOLDEN AGE

O WHEN I was a little child the flowers grew shoulder-high,

And the weeds had each some pretty thing to show,
There were jewels in the pebbly brook and jewels in the sky,
And a thousand fighting Pixies in the snow.

There were secret ways to Fairyland through every little hill,
And talking birds and squirrels in the woods,
And tiny singing fishes in the pond behind the mill,
And honey-dew in all the harebells' hoods.

O when I was a little child I had a golden tree,
With golden boughs and blossoms overhead,
And there were golden chimneys to my house that used to be,
And a sound of golden wings about my bed.

THE TIME-TRAVELLER

TO H. G. W.

“TICK-TOCK ! such a great big clock
To speak so hoarse and low !
He stands so straight, and he looks so tall
When the firelight shines on the wainscot wall,
With wonderful things to show :—
A golden bridge and a golden boat,
Golden fish in a golden moat,
Golden apples on golden boughs,
Golden folk in a high gold house,
Golden birds on a spangled sky,
Golden pheasants that flit and fly
Where the golden blossoms blow—
And oh, I wonder and wonder why,
If he can’t speak better, or just won’t try ?
But nobody seems to know.”

Tick-tock ! such an old, old clock !
Such a long, long while to go !
A hundred years and a half again
He has watched the sun and the wind and rain,
The grass and the Winter snow ;
For a hundred years and a half has seen
The old leaves fade and the new spring green,
And the little children grow.

“*Tick-tock !*” says the old, old clock
(And his voice sounds tired and slow),
“A hundred years and anigh fourscore
Over and over, and still once more.
Oh, Little Child, I have said my say
The dark night through, and the livelong day ;

I have watched your folk as they came and went,
Small and sturdy, and big and bent,
Goldenhair—Greybeard—babes and men,
I watch them now as I watched them then,
Many a year ago.

“The grown folk look in my full-moon face,
But the children peer at my painted case
With its birds and flowers ; and the grown folk all—
‘Listen!’ they say, when aloud I call
Telling the hour ; but the children hear
Tinkling stories sweet and clear.
I tell them tales of the China Seas,
Of golden parrots on golden trees,
Where pig-tailed people little and great
Fish for stars by a palace gate
With their golden rods a-row.

“I never rest and I never sleep,
I never laugh and I never weep ;
Oh, Little Boy, with the big blue eyes,
Who sleeps and wakens and laughs and cries,
I am very old, I am very wise ;
I never stop, and I never play ;
With never a halt nor a holiday
I tell my tale and I say my say—
Tick-tock !” (said the tall old clock
To the Little Child in the short white frock)
“And *now* do you wonder so ?”

THE GREEN PAVILIONS

THE high pagodas of the pine,
Through whose dim floors the South Wind sings,
Whose jewelled tassels toss and shine
Astir with airy whisperings,
There, where green jalousies divide—
Shift—for an instant blown aside—
I see a glint of rainbow wings.

All day, until the sun has set,
“The pines are full of birds!” they say.
But I know better—never yet
Shone feathered folk in such array :
When the moon rises, round and low,
O then I see, O then I know,
The Little People dance and play.

GOLDEN FEATHER

SILVER and gold is his Topknot bold,
Golden and silver, too ;
A swirl to the left and a curl to the right,
Sunshiny billows all burnished and bright
With a twirl like the tail of a Q.

Valiant and gay through the whole of the day,
Proud as a peacock's crest,
It ruffles like this and it ripples like that,
Waves like a plume 'neath the brim of his hat,
Flaunts it abroad with the best.

Haughty and high as the sun in the sky
His Topknot shines on his head—
But oh, when the Dustman comes sauntering by,
When a fat little hand rubs a shut little eye ;
Down droops the flag 'twixt a song and a sigh
As it sinks in his white little bed.

THE ORCHARD OF THE MOON

SO white with frost my garden flowers,
The blinking sun seems half afraid
To shine among its sparkling bowers,
Lest their frail garlands fade.

With dust of silver and of snow,
From elfin uplands wide and white,
They came, their faëry crops to sow—
The People of the Night.

The Little People, lithe and slim,
With filmy wings and golden eyes—
Through the blue twilight cold and dim,
I heard their mocking cries.

“Sleep sound, O Sun! sleep sound and sweet!
Sunk in your purple-curtained bed,
The snow draws nigh on feathered feet,
And all your flowers are dead.”

“O Lady Moon!” is all their song,
“Speed thou our harvest, Lady Moon!
Shine on our orchards all night long,
So they may ripen soon.”

And still they laugh, and still they sing;
Their rustling voices come and go
Like last year’s leaves that fall in Spring,
Or birds amid the snow.

Nor, till the harvest-time be done
Of faëry flower, of faëry fruit,
Shall he return, the golden Sun,
To earthly bud and shoot.

SEPTEMBER SONG

PEACHES, apricots, and plums,
Apples, when October comes,
Yellow pears and purple grapes,
Filberts in their folded capes,
Nectarines that hang or fall
By the sunny southern wall,
Wrinkled melons gold and green,
Rosy cherries crisp and clean,
Oranges from overseas—
These you have, and more than these—
Ripened fruits for pleasant cheer,
Every day in all the year.
“Greedy birds,” we hear you say,
As you watch the gardener lay
Nets upon the cherry boughs,
Lest the little thieves carouse,
Careful meshes stake and spread
All about the strawberry bed.
We the feathered folk who sing,
In your gardens all the Spring,
Have no croft nor orchard-close;
In the hedge our harvest grows.
Hind or gardener have we none
Save the kindly Autumn sun,
And our only granary
Has for roof the starry sky.
Very odd it seems to us,
Children, that you wander thus;
Strange it seems, and ever strange
Folks so rich should want to range.

Still we wonder, wonder why,
O great Birds that cannot fly,
You should leave your loaded trees
To come and steal our blackberries !

LA MARMOTTE

(AFTER L. VAN BEETHOVEN)

"Avec que si, avec que la, avec que la marmotte."

THE way is dark before us as we go,
And cold the mountain wind ;
The little flying feathers of the snow
Float round us soft and blind.

Now shut you close those little twinkling eyes,
Safe in my coat, asleep ;—
I shall know surest where the river lies,
And where the drifts are deep.

Sleep, little prying one—'tis cold and still,
Naught but the dark to see—
Yet golden-bright behind yon crest of hill
The village lights may be.

Soft on the snow my naked feet fall light,
Swift as the brown owls fly ;—
Now never fear but we shall sup to-night,
My Marmot, you and I.

THE LAMP AND THE LUTE

CHIAROSCURO

I WALKED alone in a wood where the fluttering Spring
wind blew

Through veils of silvery sunlight and silvered green,
A glory of birds about me and Spring's own sheen
Fresh upon blossom and bough in glints of crystalline dew.

And I said to my heart, Can it be that at last we know?

Can it be given to us to indeed divine

The soul in the image, the great artificer's sign,
Spring as the symbol of life—that the Maker conceived it so?

I walked in a glamour of gold and of golden leaves,

The dusk of a low, late sunset, and heard the call

Of Robin singing sweetest and last of all :

Still were the clouds, but stiller the rich chrysanthemum sheaves.

And I said to my heart, Were this the likeness of Life's
last close,

Splendours of song-thrilled silence and mellow peace,

Still should we mourn the waning of Summer's lease,

Came thus the ultimate ending as loose leaves fall from a rose?

I said to my heart, Behold, then, God's meaning clear—

Life all a dream and a promise, shown forth in Spring ;

Even in the low, late sunset one bird to sing

When death comes, golden and gracious, as comes the fall of
the year.

REVENANT

THE old house is so full of memories,
Of memories how far fairer than we knew ! . . .
Dim dreams stay brooding in its garden-trees,
Like migrant birds whose homing-time is due.

The old house was so full of joy and grief,
Of beaconing hopes, of cold, half-imaged fears ;
Was ever harvested so strange a sheaf,
Golden with gladness, dun and grey with tears ?

How fair those haunts on mist-veiled summer dawns,
The lilac hedge, the lupins' spires of blue,
The old embowering trees that shrined the lawns,
The dark recesses of the cloistered yew !

And still my pilgrim thoughts go wandering—
I pass the sentinel cypress by the door,
I mount the stairway to the western wing
Where the late sun-rays lie along the floor.

From that wide chamber where the last rays fall
Through latticed casements hung with clustering vine,
And glimmer like gold water on the wall,
There, as of old, I watch the sunset shine.

O glad new dwellers by our ancient hearth,
Who come and go where once we came and went,
Yours is the fruitage of the orchard-garth,
The rich dark roses and the jasmine scent.

You will not grudge my visiting spirit place
About the rooms—along the misty grass. . . .
Even though some glimpse betray me—of your grace
Unnamed, unhidden, let the poor ghost pass.

THE HOUSE OF CHANGE

THE wind and the rain they were beating, blowing down,
All along the highway and all along the lea ;
All the weary miles from the country to the town,
Long was the road to the one I sped to see.

The casements were shut and the iron gates made fast ;
The heavy door was barred—no welcome there to win.
'Twas the hand of a stranger that opened it at last,
And the voice of a stranger that bade me enter in.

And the one that I loved, that I went in haste to seek,
One I shall seek no more, no more in days to be,
Closed were her eyes and she did not smile or speak—
'Twas the first time of all that she had no word for me.

All the old familiar things wore an alien air,
Book and picture, hall and hearth, garden plot and tree :—
Naught was there for change, yet change was everywhere,
And the house that was home was a strange house to me.

LUX ET UMBRA

I STAY here in the shadow while you stand forth in the
sun,
The clear, enveloping shadow where all desires are as one—
I see the sheen of your armour, the glint on your helmet's
crest ;
Your way is blazoned in splendour, but mine for me is the
best.

I in my cloistered garden and you on the highwayside—
Courtier and Merchant and Palmer they all salute as you
ride ;
You rescue the captive maidens, you right the ruin and wrong.
They praise your name in the palace, your deeds are echoed
in song.

Mine is the realm of silver, while yours is the realm of gold,
I have my guests and my comrades—the maimed, the lost,
and the old,
The weary and overladen—who so welcome as these
To rest by the whispering fountains and shelter beneath the
trees ?

Still as the pageant passes, brilliant and brave and gay,
Glad with undying beauty I watch it pass on its way,
Glad that our fates were ordered or ever the world was made,
That you should ride in the sunshine, and I look forth from
the shade.

THE WOOD FIRE

THE firelight flickers on the walls,
The shadows mop and mow ;
Without, the winter twilight falls
And the first winter snow.

My fir-cones fire the beechen twigs
Where still some frail leaves cling,
Stray leaves that quiver on their sprigs,
As long ago in spring.

The fir-cones flare—they burn so bright
They light the dusky room,—
They cannot bring to me to-night
The pine-wood's old perfume.

I toss an acorn now and then
Among the oak-tree strays,
I watch the spoils of heath and glen
Together blink and blaze.

On the low hearth a dead leaf lies,
One leaf the flames have left,
Untinged of autumn's sunset dyes,
Of summer's grace bereft.

.

My heart is like this dry dead leaf
Set in the hearth-light's glow—
Older than winter's oldest grief,
And colder than the snow.

THE WIND OF DREAMS

WIND of the Downs,—from upland spaces blowing,
Salt with the fragrance of the Southland sea,
Sweet with wild herbs in smoothest greensward growing,
You bring the harvest of my dreams to me.

Wraiths that the scented breath of summer raises,
Ghosts of dead hours and flowers that once were fair—
Sorrel of nodding-grass and white moon-daisies—
Glimmer and fade upon the fragrant air.

I hear the harvest wagons homeward driven
Through dusky lanes by hedgerows dark with leaves—
The low, gold moon, hung in a sapphire heaven,
Looks on the wide fields and the gathered sheaves.

Wind of the Downs,—from our cloud-swept upland spaces,
Moorland, and orchard-close, and water-lea,
You bring the voices of the vanished faces—
Dreams of old dreams and days long lost to me.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

TO J. M. P.

POISED on the summit of the deodar
A song-thrush sings this mild mid-winter day ;
Sings of the Spring, although the Spring is far
And far away.

I shall not see the radiant white-winged throng
That wanders where the Heavenly gardens are,
Nor hear the floating echoes of their song
From star to star.

Yet, though immortal melodies I miss,
Here dwells my heart, nor seeks to soar above
The music of the kindly Earth—and this—
The voice I love.

Infinite solace falls with every note,
And dead dreams flower again the while he sings,
My Angel with the throbbing speckled throat
And dim brown wings.

IN SURREY LANES

IN Surrey lanes the dead leaves lie to-day,
And bare, brown boughs touch hands across the way ;
The summer birds are flown to southern plains.
Only the tawny-breasted robin reigns
In these dismantled palaces of May,
And still some wandering fragrance dimly feigns
The breath of woodlands fresh with April rains,
A phantom of lost Spring that flits away
In Surrey lanes.

Spring's phantom knocks on Winter's window-panes ;
As Youth's eidolon, too, the heart constrains,
Haunting these paths where we were wont to stray
Long years ago, ere all the gold turned grey—
Our youth has perished, yet Youth's ghost remains
In Surrey lanes.

THE DARK OF THE MOON

CASSIOPŒIA'S silver throne,
So crystal-clear to-night it is,
Across my orchard, blossom-strown,
I turn to watch how bright it is.

Gone is the twisted apple-bough
That framed the self-same stars of old,
No moon beyond the poplars now
Bedeck the grass with bars of gold.

Yet this grave, moonless night that folds
The silent orchard-close in gloom,
How many a fragrant promise holds,
Though there is scarce a rose in bloom.

How bright to-night, how dear the dream,
The dream of summer days to be ;
The thought of wood and field and stream
New songs to know, new ways to see.

How dark those other days to come,
When happy seasons pass anew,
And find me mute and blind and numb,
No more to dream 'twixt grass and dew.

And yet—when this fair lease is run,
'Tis fresh green grass shall cover me ;
My mound shall take the wind and sun,
The starry sky be over me.

.
Dear is the dream, O flowers and trees,
'To share the stars and sun with you,
And good to think, when God shall please,
At last I shall be one with you.

WINTER MUSIC

ALL through the oak-wood
Rooks fly and call ;
Fast down the rustling boughs
Brown acorns fall.

Swart on the sunset
Rooks float and cry ;
Pale in the garden-plot
Late roses die.

What though December dawn ?
Robins will sing ;
Over the rimy lawn
Starlings clap wing.

Starlings of speckled coat,
Whimsical song,
Where the old windfalls lie
Gossip and throng.

Wren on the apple-bough,
Sweet-voiced and shrill,
Clear your crescendos rise,
Thrill upon thrill.

Though spring be far away,
Fair summer lost,
Hail to the Minstrels who
Sing in the frost !

REISEBILDER

I HEARD the swallows twittering in the dawn,
Their sweet-voiced travel-talk beneath the eaves ;
September dew lay deep upon the lawn,
Strewn with gold patines of new-fallen leaves.

I saw the valley shining through the mist,
With deep woods billowing to the distant weald ;
The far horizon's tender amethyst
Glimmered above the sea's dim silver field.

The birds' soft gossip woke the thought of you
In your enchanted palace oversea,
And, as I dreamed, the longing rose anew
For other lands, and days no more to be ;

For the white road, the olives on the hill,
The marble terrace high above the bay,
The slender cypress torches, and the still
Gold air of evening folding in the day.

Ah, when you watch aloft on eager wing
Their tiny crossbows sharp against the blue,
Will you divine what dreams are following ?
How with the birds my heart goes southward too ?

IRREMEABILIS UNDA

To J. M. P.

I SIT and watch the weary, weeping weather,
The clustering rain-drops thicken on the pane ;
I hear the waters and the winds complain.
O for the years when we were young together.

The dripping branches and the drenched dark heather,
The low grey clouds that shroud the lonely height,
Weigh on my heart that once had found them light.
O for the years when we were young together.

Time, the implacable, has us in his tether,
And Memory's self turns traitor—when I seek
Her hoard of golden lore she will not speak—
O for the years when we were young together.

Though still may fall a tide of halcyon weather
With sun to gild such treasures as remain,
What Time has taken he cannot give again—
O for the years when we were young together.

SERENADE

A FAR beyond the hill's dim breast,
Beyond the restless wastes of sea,
The dreaming moon has sunk to rest—
Beloved, do you dream of me?

For us no golden moon may rise;
The sun that rose for us is set,
Still, when the night-winds kiss your eyes
Beloved, do you quite forget?

Oh, sun and moon they go their way,
And day is long and night is sweet
Between the gold hours and the grey,
But never sun and moon may meet.

And still, beyond some outmost star,
Perchance their lonely ways are met,
Perchance where sleep and silence are
They dream of one another yet.

THE ALTAR OF THE DEAD

"Ein Tag im Jahre ist den Todten frei."

THE skies are dim, the wind-stripped trees stand sighing
Where cold airs move about the dying year ;
Let this one day be theirs beyond denying,
The Dead who once were dear.

Put off the shield and buckler brave of seeming,
Mail we must wear upon the world's highway,
That we shall wear no whit the worse for dreaming
Their dream for this one day.

To that dark altar through still, shadowy spaces
Silent we go—our footfalls make no sound—
Each to a separate shrine we set our faces,
Each has his holy ground.

All the long year's long days are for the living,
All, all but one with wintry skies of lead ;
One short poor day—how should you grudge the giving
This one day to the Dead ?

FATA MORGANA

I DREAMED the peach-trees blossomed once again,
I dreamed the birds were calling in the dew,
Sun-rays fell round me like a golden rain,
And all was well with us and life was new.

How that great joy was born I cannot tell . . .
The warm low sun, the blossom on the wall,
With life so new to us and all so well,
And some lost word I never may recall.

Like a dark pool that once did mirror spring,
Or like a sealed shrine with a secret flame,
Though boughs are barren now and no birds sing,
I know the joy I never may reclaim.

THE LAUNCH OF THE LEAVES

THE yellow leaves go sailing down the stream
Whose whispering waters run to seek the sea,
Where slender alders and pale aspens gleam
And every wych-elm seems a golden tree.

Amber, and brown, and red the light leaves float ;
You cannot see the Pixy at the prow,
But each gay galleon is a faery's boat—
The good folk throng the craft from poop to bow.

You cannot hear the laughter and the song,
Though to sweet reedy pipes they laugh and sing ;
You'd say—"So late the robin sings and long
This autumn twilight has a sound of spring."

The Hunter's Moon is rising, broad and bright,
A bronze lamp in the ashen-coloured sky,
To light their shallops down the stream to-night—
Far through the woods I hear the white owls cry.

From the low bridge I watch them on their way,
Fleeing the sunless, starveling days to be—
How would my heart rejoice if, even as they,
I, too, might follow summer oversea,

THE GARNER

ALL that's best remains, the rest's but dust of withered
leaves ;

Memories of a thousand Aprils haunt the lilac close.
This year's harvest hoards the wealth of centuries' garnered
sheaves,

All the fragrance of the past breathes in this year's rose.

I hear the call of all the years in every springtide voice,

All our music's sweeter for the music said and sung ;

Echoes held through all the ages bid the heart rejoice,

Even as those that sang together when the earth was
young.

Surely trees are greener now and skies are bluer far,

Every summer gathers beauty from the summers past and
gone ;

Countless centuries of splendour shine from every star,

While my heart enshrines them, those I loved live on.

There is treasure yet in Time's grey castle keep,

There's a ship will sail her course on a chartless sea.

My lost world opens with the gates of sleep,

Dreams give back the glory of my youth to me.

TO A CHILD

WHEN that dark labyrinth I needs must thread,
The citadel of dreams, of phantom strife,
Abhorrèd tenement of Death-in-Life,
Peopled with changeful shapes of doubt and dread,
Shapes that the day disowns made manifest—
I know one anguish crowning all the rest,
When, looking down, I see your golden head—
Why, 'twas but now I saw you safe to rest,
The hearth-light flickering on your little bed ;
Yet, lo ! white-robed, with pattering bare feet
Behold you here, close following at my side,
And all the terrors of the darkling street,
Or sheer abyss, or foe malign and fleet,
A million million times are multiplied.

With strengthless limbs and lips that move in vain,
I strive for safety now as ne'er before,
Seek the false shelter, hold the haspless door
In impotent intolerable pain,
Until this tyranny be past once more.

To the dark labyrinth I perforce must thread
Oh, come not thou, Dear Heart ; those murky ways
Are desolate indeed, and most forlorn,
And all unfit for little feet to tread.
To my sharp sorrow spare this sharpest thorn,
The while my prison is that weary maze.

If thou must wander in the fields of sleep,
Go roam the happy meadows, gold and white,
Where young lambs play and daisies take the light ;

Come not among the souls that shudder and weep.

So I, enfranchised from the sorest stress,
Shall go my way not all un comforted,

Alone, and thankful for my loneliness ;
No more afraid of dungeon or of deep,
Or melancholy dwellings of the dead.

THE EARLY STARS

THE slender alders by the stream
Are veiled in leafage faint and fine,
Frail as the fabric of a dream,
And all about the grasses gleam
The gilt stars of the celandine.

Once on a day—how long ago—
Deep in the grass we saw them shine,
Beside this selfsame streamlet's flow,
While sweet birds fluted high and low,
The gilt stars of the celandine.

Beneath the trees, beside the stream,
Fair as of old we see them shine—
Dear, might we dream the selfsame dream,
Were youth once more but yours and mine!—
Evangels from the Past they seem,
The gilt stars of the celandine.

NOVEMBER SUNSET

THE starlings pipe and whisper in the trees,
Now loud, now low, for Autumn's lease is run;
The skies are stiller than still Summer seas,
As sinks in shining and translucent ease
The late November sun.

November sunset—and a phantom moon
That floats, a shell-pale sickle, in the blue;
The light that comes—the light that goes so soon,
Both with the season's silence seem in tune,
With my heart's silence too.

This misty hour whose garrulous birds will cease
Their fitful gossip as the west grows pale,
Breathes it not more of solace and release
Than sunsets golden as the Golden Fleece
Or song of nightingale?

NOVEMBER ROSES

PALE roses lingering in the frost,
Strange the behest that bids you stay ;
Summer is gone and Autumn lost,
That golden world of yesterday.

Wan is November's sun and cold,
The valley mists rise white and chill,
The trees have shed their garnered gold—
You wear your fading damask still.

No bright-winged courtiers fine and fleet
Are yours, nor serfs with jewelled eyes ;
The dead leaves lie about your feet,
The grey moths are your butterflies.

In those dim fields beyond the day
Where all the vanished roses bloom
Beside the ancient waterway
That winds about dead Summer's tomb,

How shall you tell the rose of June,
The rose of Autumn's mellow days,
That you have known November's moon
And slept beneath her frosty rays ?

Those who but dwelt in Summer's house,
How should they dream, that sun-born throng,
That you have seen the leafless boughs
And heard the thrush's winter song ?

AUTUMNAL

THE robin sings in the rain, and the first leaves fall,
Withering sun-flowers fling their tarnished gold by the
wall,

Hedge-fruits ripen and drop in coppice and lane,
And I am glad from my heart that the years return not again.

May-flowers fade with the May, and are past and gone,
Butterflies live their day, and the year goes on :
Yet the heart that was blithe with the bird and the butterfly
Lingers and lives, and outlives, while the years go by.

The end of the tale is best, and the close of the song
For the heart that has beat too fast, that has beat too long ;
And my heart is glad that the years return not again—
Glad that the first leaves fall and the robin sings in the rain.

THE UNFORESEEN

HOW could I dream a day would ever dawn,
How could I dream the day would dawn, indeed,
When daffodils should glisten on the lawn,
And I not heed?

How strange it seems to think I never knew,
That one day Spring's first breath would thrill the air,
Brown furrows shine beneath the rain-washed blue,
And I not care.

How could I tell a long-remembered voice
Might stir grey sorrow from her wintry sleep?
I did not dream the song-thrush would rejoice,
And I but weep.

THE LOW ROAD

"So ye'll tak' the high road, and I'll tak' the laigh road."

OLD SONG.

OH it's you shall scale the eagle's crag and brave the boar
at bay,

And you shall march with drum and fife

And lead the heroes on to strife,

But I will wander on the heath and watch the linnets play,

And I will saunter where the stream goes singing on its way.

'Tis you shall have a golden throne and laurels in your hair,

And castled courts, but let me keep

My leafy haunt where woods are deep,

For goldcrest and blackcap and nightingale sing there

And the willow-warbler's plaintive lute makes music of the
air.

Great Kings shall bear you shoulder-high and poets praise
your worth,

But leave to me my orchard-stead

With green boughs crossing overhead,

The squirrel in the pine-tree, the wood-owl's mellow mirth—

The rare things, the shy things, the little things of earth.

THE CHILD ALONE

PROPPED in my pleasant easy-chair,
I sat and looked across the square.
I was too tired to read or play,
For it had been so long a day.

The days are long when you are ill,
And, when you're lonely, longer still,
You look your playbooks through and through
Till there seems nothing more to do.

But as I looked across the square,
I saw inside a window there
A lamp that seemed just like a rose,
Or those great pinks our florist grows.

And underneath the lamp's soft light
Were children dancing, some in white,
And some in yellow, pink, and blue,
And some wore caps from crackers, too.

They all went dancing in a ring,
And one was queen and one was king ;
And then another game began
That looked like "Catch-me-if-you-can."

I could have watched them all night long,
But someone's hand came, firm and strong,
And closed the two long curtains quite,
Till there was nothing but the night.

I think, perhaps, if they had known
That I was sitting here alone . . .
I'm sure that if they only knew,
They'd not have drawn their curtains to.

THE CHRISTMAS-TREE

LONG, long ago the childish dream had place,
Dream of Romance—of Winter's snowy face
Illumined to the likeness of a star—
You, who still dwell where the Immortals are,
Bring the old dream to me exiled so long ;
Back march the lost delights with banner and song,
The past reclaims its unforgotten grace.

All the old glamour comes again to pass—
The wonders of that wide, high-windowed room,
The clustered lights, the gauds of wax and glass,
Marvellous fruits and gay flowers all a-bloom,
Cupids and peacocks, parrots green as grass
On sparkling boughs—the fir-tree's strange perfume—
On high the star-crowned fay. . . . Rich memories
Come like a swarm of homing golden bees
Making more fair than spring mid-winter's gloom—
—O Child, you give me back my Christmasses.

You give me back an earlier Paradise,
Dear little nestling with the eager eyes,
A faëry-land of far-remembered joy
Full-flowered with pleasant mystery and surprise :
Let us be glad then in the ancient ploy—
Let us make merry and let who will be wise.

SURIMONO

To V. H. R.

"C'est aujourd'hui la fête de Virginie . . ."

FRANCIS JAMMES.

YOU may remember how the skies were dim
And all the air was full of floating shadows,
Tall pine-trees stood upon the broad hill's rim
And dark woods loomed beyond the water-meadows.

It was your Birthday . . . I, from overseas,
Had come by many a vagrant path and byway
To bide awhile beneath your ancient trees,
Ere yet I sought once more the swallows' highway.

Still I remember . . . nor will you forget
How when, beclouded in the windless weather,
The silver phantom of the sun had set,
Along the fields we walked and talked together.

And all our talk went to the same good tune
Of rare days done, of those to come thereafter,
While up the hillside through the night's still noon
We wandered with the white October moon
And listened to the owls' delightful laughter.

THE NEW MOON

BEYOND the crooked apple-bough
The sickle moon shines clear and thin,
And who but robin sets him now
To sing the new moon in?

The old moon knew the nightingale,
She saw the cowslips come and go;
She heard the cuckoo's oft-told tale,
The thrush sing high and low.

Now thrush and nightingale are mute,
Far oversea the cuckoo flies,
No blackbird tunes his amber lute
To see this new moon rise.

The leaves hang heavy on the bough,
The gold is gone from broom and whin,
And there is none but robin now
To sing the new moon in.

ALBURY OLD CHURCH

"The shell of the old church dismantled by Mr. Drummond.
. . . . This church is mentioned in Domesday. . . ."

GUIDE-BOOK.

HALF-RUINOUS it fronts the day
Encircled by its patient dead,
Remote from life and still as they
The church where once they came to pray,
That now stands disinherited.

From Saxon years in sun and rain
Came high and humble, small and great
To worship where their dead were lain—
Now none may worship there again,
It stood too near a rich man's gate.

A church where no man comes to pray,
The windows sealed and barred the door,
Only dank lichens blotched and grey
Unfold their ensigns of decay
About the empty chancel floor.

Yet when the sun brings back the Spring
The belfry tower no more is mute,
For robins build and thrushes sing,
Brown linnets flit on eager wing
And the shy blackbird tunes his lute.

A lonely church—its lonely dead—
All desolate and half-forgot . . .
And yet—in living turquoise spread
By sunken stone and grass-grown bed
Wanders the wild forget-me-not.

THE STARLING

TO R. B. M. W.

ALL bronze and purple is his coat,
His breast is like a beetle's wing,
Majestic swells his speckled throat—
He has so many songs to sing.

I hear him scolding sharp and shrill
Upon the twisted orchard limb,
I watch him peck with eager bill
The russet apples left for him.

The neighbours write him down a pest,
“A reiving, brawling rogue!” they say;
Yet you may travel east and west
And never find a heart so gay,

So full of mirth and song and jest,
All quip and chat and joyous whim—
I sing the bird who sings his best
When flowers are dead and skies are dim.

THE HAUNTED PALACE

To Henry James

THE cuckoo calls adown the green arcade
Where sunshafts fall aslant between the leaves ;
He knows the haunted palace in the glade,
The white pavilion with the shadowy eaves.

There grows the orchard with the golden fruit,
Whose old trees stand knee-deep in flowering grass,
Where hands invisible play an unseen lute,
And the still moat gleams grey as ancient glass.

Sweet echoes, strayed from other days and lands,
Sigh through the chambers when the sun is low ;
White wood-doves—or a glimpse of waved white hands?—
By the deep casements dimly glance and go.

The golden silence of the leafy glade
Now and again seems stirred by some faint air ;
Where green leaves glimmer 'twixt the sun and shade
Pale glints of gold betray a dryad's hair.

Haunt of sweet sounds and sweeter silences,
Would that at last my wandering feet might win
To your calm threshold bowered in forest trees,
Pass the wide door once more and enter in.

The cuckoo calls me down the green arcade
Still singing of the way I used to know,
The path that leads to the enchanted glade
Peopled with dreams that died long years ago.

HEART OF GOLD

"Thou who passest on the path, if haply thou dost mark this monument, laugh not, I pray thee, though it is a dog's grave ; tears fell for me, and the dust was heaped above me by a master's hand's. . . ."—GREEK ANTHOLOGY.

THEY'VE all gone out a-walking
This day of blue and gold,
But you stay here behind with me
Just as of old.

Just as of old—and yet not so—
I wander as I will
About the grassy garden-plot,
But you lie still.

You with the little eager feet,
The eyes of tender brown,
The eyes and feet that followed me
Aye up and down.

The sward lies smooth above you,
Your gentle heart is cold,
And mine seems like to break for you,
Dear Heart of Gold.

STORNELLO

FROM the dark wharf beside the long dull stream
We watched the winter sunset's fading fire
Illume tall towers and parapets of dream,
Grey bastions of the land of heart's desire.

Unto our ears the murmurous stillness bore,
Flung from some craft unseen that passed along
Wrapt in the sombre shadows of the shore,
A flute's frail voice, a vagrant waif of song.

And then a veil of sudden darkness fell—
The heavenly gates were gone—we know not how—
Only the tolling of a distant bell
Swung slow athwart the water-way, and now

The dream enshrined in that strange sunset's glow,
The word that wistful air seemed fain to say,
I cannot tell you, though at last I know,
For you have wandered far, too far, away.

ULTIMA THULE

THE yellow light beyond the trees
It shines so clear at evening,
Full of strange dreams and promises
The while the last late minstrels sing.

Beyond the tree-boles dark and high,
Beyond the rampart of the hill,
The golden roses of the sky,
Though ours grow dim, keep shining still.

Through that calm space where sunset flowers,
So fair they shine, we seem to see
Some age of gold that once was ours,
An age of gold that's yet to be.

Ah, when the word comes down the wind
And we must seek the darkening quays,
Through what dim doorway shall we find
The yellow light beyond the trees ?

THE GARDEN OF MNEMOSYNE

THERE are no roses in the garden now,
The summer birds have vanished oversea,
The ashen keys hang rusty on the bough,
Autumn's gold ensigns flame from tree to tree.

Music and perfume sleep, and light is fled,
Autumn's fine gold is faery gold, we know.
Where shall we turn for joy when flowers are dead,
When birds are silent, and the cold winds blow?

The summer birds have vanished oversea,
But Memory's palace-courts are full of song;
There sings a nightingale for you and me,
And there a hidden lute plays all day long.

There are no roses in the garden now,
But Memory's garden grows each day more fair;
Sun, moon, and stars her orchard close endow,
And there bloom roses—roses everywhere.

THALASSA

To Sir Walter Raleigh

LAST night once more I dreamed I saw the sea,
The ripples swept my feet—benign and bright
The pale sands stretched wide-welcoming arms to me,
The little crested waves were crisped with white.

The shallows sparkled where the sun-glints flew,
The white crests raced before the salt wind's breath ;
Far down the shingle where the strong tides drew
I heard the pæan of life, the psalm of death.

And, as I stood, so great a gladness came,
A joy so deep I found no word to say ;
The wonder warmed my heart like living flame,
Even as I wakened to the land-bound day.

By lonely outland coasts and strange isles set
Where vast green waters surge and great winds blow,
They say that sea-whelmed souls go sailing yet,
On swift white wings the drowned folk come and go.

So would I fare—O Thou who didst decree
The sea-mew's soul in this poor earth of mine,
Bidding my very sense and spirit to be
Deep tintured with the sea-breeze and the brine.

Shall it not fall that when the last light fails,
The doors be opened and the long lease run,
My ghost may go perchance on silver sails
To wander 'twixt the sea-foam and the sun ?

THE WHITE GARDEN

To Laurence Housman

SO white with frost my garden lies,
So still, so bright, my garden is,
For sure the fields of Paradise
Show not more fair than this :
The streets of pearl, the gates of gold,
Are they, indeed, more peace-posessed
Than this white pleasaunce, pure and cold,
Against an amber west ?

OMNIA SOMNIA

DAWN drives the dreams away, yet some abide.

Once, in a tide of pale and sunless weather,
I dreamed I wandered on a bare hillside,
When suddenly the birds sang all together.

Still it was winter, even in the dream ;

There was no leaf nor bud nor young grass springing ;
The skies shone cold above the frost-bound stream ;
It was not spring, and yet the birds were singing.

Blackbird and thrush and plaintive willow wren,

Chaffinch and lark and linnet, all were calling ;
A golden web of music held me then,
Innumerable voices, rising, falling.

O, never do the birds of April sing

More sweet than in that dream I still remember :
Perchance the heart may keep its songs of spring
Even through the wintry dream of life's December.

TO PERDITA

DEAR, when green apple-boughs toss in the wind,
Under dark summer skies starless and blind,
Wet with the summer rain,
Do old dreams rise again,
Or are they all forgot, time out of mind?

Dear, when red rose petals lie on the grass,
Dim in the light of the dawn as I pass,
Mirrored in memories
Others as fair as these
Bloom like the face of a rose in the glass.

Flower of the shadows none other may find,
Borne like the breath of a rose on the wind,
Now when the night winds raise
Ghosts of dead summer days,
Swathes of a harvest men reap not nor bind.

PRISONERS AND CAPTIVES

ABOVE the voices of the street
I heard a voice my heart held dear ;
So loud it rang, so piercing sweet,
I could not choose but stand to hear.
Each mellow phrase, each quick repeat
Cried to me through the young Spring night,
And lo, within a glance's flight,
Through din of wheels and hurrying feet,
Lit by the street-lamp's amber light,
A prisoned thrush sang high and clear.

The gold lights glimmered, blurred with tears—
Powerless to save, I passed you by
As one who dreams, and dreaming, hears
His own doom of captivity. . . .
Ah, Little Brother, we are peers,
Though brief for you the time shall be
Ere the Dark Warden sets you free ;
You will be free betimes, while I,
Pent in the Labyrinth of Years,
Sing of the Spring that's lost to me.

SOUVENIR

To M. J.

LONG years ago, long miles away,
'Twas quiet autumn when we met—
The little hamlet white and grey
That crowned the cliffs above the bay,
Do you remember, Margaret?

Long miles away, long years ago,
And still the old affection stays,
And still you keep, full well I know,
Remembrance of those autumn days.

And now that autumn once again
Wakes slumbering echoes in the heart
I bring no wealth of wine or grain,
Nor pomp of loaded harvest-wain,
Only these idle leaves—in part
The fruit of sun and wind and rain.

Here where the wind of Memory blows
I bring you home no golden sheaves,
Only dim drifts from last year's rose
And handfuls of October leaves.

THE END OF THE DAY

TO B. M.

SEE, where the path winds, laced with soft shadows now,
That stood so steep before in the full sun ;
How calm and cool the evening falls, and how
Benign the breeze upon the traveller's brow—
The wanderer whose goal is nearly won.
What peace and cheer the journey's close endow,
Now that he knows the long, bright day is done !

REVEILLE

A BIRD in the silver dawn
Was singing, singing to me,
It sang so shrill, so sweet
In the little wood by the sea.

The long, low wash of the wave,
The quiet face of the sun,
The cool, salt breath of the air,
Seemed silence and song made one.

The ripples sighed at my feet
On the shining sands where I stood,
But the leaves were still on the trees
While the robin sang in the wood.

In the green ash-grove by the sea
Sweet was the song that I heard,
For Hope and Courage and Joy
Woke at the voice of the bird.

SONG

SEE, the leaves are falling,
Summer's dream is over,
Gone beyond recalling—
Dead leaves lie above her.

Our dream, too, is dying
With the dying flowers—
See, the leaves are flying
Through the wind-swept bowers.

Summer birds have left us,
Our farewell forestalling
Ere the hour bereft us—
See, the leaves are falling.

THE MOON OF LEAVES

“In the pleasant Moon of Leaves.”

LAST year the swallows built beneath our eaves,
Filling the twilight hour with joyous cries ;
It was the pleasant, idle Moon of Leaves,
When all the flowers are gay as butterflies.

And now the Moon of Leaves is here again,
But no birds build beneath our sheltering thatch,
No smiling presence gilds the diamond pane,
No gracious hand is heard upon the latch.

Now last year's dream with last year's birds is flown,
But still we seek for that which came unsought ;
Unsought it came, and dwelt with us unknown,
And we have lost the gift of joy it brought.

We knew not whence it came nor where it went,
Nor why it came and went, nor question how
The largesse of that Moon of Leaves was spent. . . .
The Moon of Withered Leaves is with us now.

THE WILLOW-WREN

“Half angel and half bird.”

FAR oversea he roamed the winter through,
His way by Kasvin and Khorassan winging,
And now he haunts the Surrey hills anew
To charm their woodlands with his faery singing.
His prelude seems the very voice of Spring,
Through the green larchwood as he flits and perches;
Even such an air a dryad's wraith might sing
Between the beeches and the silver birches.
Light-poised, half-hid, aloft upon the spray,
Hued like the olive, fine and willow-slender,
Over and over through the lyric day
He sings each delicate cadence, shy and tender.
But when the May flowers fade and grass grows long,
In wistful sequel, set 'twixt speech and sighing,
Faint fall the lingering closes of his song,
Most sweet—most sad : he knows the Spring is dying.

THE MAGIC CARPET

THE rooks sailed over the roof with a sound of the sea,
With a sound of the sea on the shore in the gathering
dark ;

The west shone pale through the boughs of the sycamore
tree

As the rooks sailed home to their haunt in the dusky park.

Over the house, and away through dim deeps of the air,
Chiming with myriad voices the day to its rest,
Still they went sailing, sailing and clamouring there,
And my heart flew too, like a wild bird back to the nest.
For lo, at the sound of their passage no more might I see
Dun of the glimmering dusk, or wan skies growing cold—
I was back in the green isle of youth, looking down to the
quay,

And marshland, and valley, and cliff through a sunset all gold.

Marshland, and valley, and down, and the sea out beyond,
There, as in days long done, it was given to me
To stand for a moment's span in a dream's frail bond,
For the call of the homing rooks was the call of the sea.

THE SUN'S LAST SHADOW

THYME and eyebright pave the Downs to-day ;
Hard red berries load the hawthorn bough,
Heavier than the vanished snows of May—
Scarce a span of Autumn's left us now.

Thyme and eyebright—pearl and amethyst—
Fine mosaic wrought of Summer's hand ;
White-domed mushrooms glimmer in the mist,
Crystals gem the cobwebs, strand on strand.

Owls go hunting in the early night,
Hunting, calling, laughing, to and fro ;
While the pale half-moon shows her glow-worm light,
Merry and blithe of heart they come and go.

Though the noonday sun shines warm and clear,
Thin and frail of petal is the rose ;
The minnesinger of the failing year
Flutes her sweet requiem—the robin knows.

“Hark !” sings the robin, “Winter stalks anear—
Stark Winter in his hodden frock and hood.”
Hush !—as the leaves fall, surely you can hear
His stealthy sandals stalking through the wood.

CUL-DE-SAC

THE narrow houses dark and high
Shut out the sun, shut out the sky
Where neighbouring windows stand at gaze,
While blackened branches intervene
With wintry fingers bare and lean,
Though leafy still in summer days.

Now Winter tells what Summer knew ;
Here, even here, the skies were blue,
And green leaves thrilled to vernal song
(Now Summer's secret stands confessed)—
Some wandering minstrel built a nest
And made sweet music all day long.

TWO SONGS

TO THOMAS HARDY

THROUGH the gold of a windy sunset,
At the gates of a wayward Spring,
Brave and joyous and gallant,
I heard the storm-thrush sing.

From the heights of the beechwood flinging
His challenge, valiant and free—
“Live, live, live!” he was singing;
“The best of the year’s to be.”

With the best of the year before us,
Was ever a joy so great—
The fresh wild song and the west wind,
And a hand upon Spring’s own gate?

* * * * *

By the hearth of a quiet Autumn,
In the dawn of a silver day,
While light leaves float by the lintel,
The robin sings on a spray.

“Wake, oh, wake!” he is singing
Through the daybreak of misty breath.
“Bethink you now and remember—
Remember Winter and Death!”

AUTUMN'S LUTE

*La flute amère d'Automne
Pleure dans le soir anxieux.*

AUTUMN'S melancholy lute
Calls so clear and calls so sweet,
Through the forest brown and mute,
Down the white-walled village street.

"Follow now, Oh follow now !
Burns the leaf upon the bough ;
Cross the mountains hoar and old,
To the land of sunset gold."

Autumn beckons as she goes,—
"Follow me, Oh follow me,
Would you 'scape the winter snows
And the happy valleys see !"

Autumn's amber-coloured veil
Floats along the evening breeze,
Like a gilded galleon's sail
Beckoning on to splendid seas

Autumn's lute sounds low and clear—
Autumn's melancholy lute,
"Follow here, Oh follow here !"
Over woods and meadows mute.

"Come away, Oh come away !
Sundown calls you home from day ;
Night is near and earth grows cold ;
Follow through the sunset gold."

THE LOST LEADER

(I. M. W. E. H.)

HAIL and farewell—through gold of sunset glowing
Brave as of old your ship puts forth to sea ;
We stand upon the shore to watch your going,
Dreaming of years long gone of years to be.

The ship sails forth, but not from our remembrance,
We who were once of your ship's company :
Master of many a strong and splendid semblance,
Where shall we find another like to thee ?

Your ship sets sail—whate'er the End restore you,
Or golden isles, or Night without a star,
Never, Great-Heart, has braver barque before you
Or sailed, or fought, or crossed the soundless bar.

THE MASTER-SINGER

I N this veiled hush before the next soft shower,
Listen—'tis he, my Lord the blackbird sings,
A wizard chanting from his haunted tower
Legends of lost innumerable Springs.

Long, long ago, and far, and far away,
These golden falls, these strange *legatos* seem
To raise the ghost of a forgotten day,
Or thread the dim maze of some distant dream.

Between the wet woods and the clouded skies
His spell is wrought—the immemorial rune
That charms me back to that lost land which lies
East of the Sun and Westward of the Moon.

MEMENTO MORI

GAY antirrhinums, powdered, striped, and freaked,
Laugh down the garden ways in motley wise,
Rose-lipped, white-throated, blushing cherry-cheeked
Some—and the rest like summer butterflies.

Ah, but they fail beneath the Autumn sun,
The low gold sunsets of the dying year ;
For Summer wanes—for Summer's lease is run ;
Autumn is come, and Winter waits anear.

The threat takes form, the lurking Fate's revealed :
Lo, undisguised, stark symbol of the tomb,
Or ever the hordes of Winter take the field—
The bare brown skull behind the mask of bloom.

NUNC DIMITTIS

I SHALL be glad when all the leaves are gone,
These rich and glittering vestments of decay—
Summer is dead and Autumn passed away,
Why should the funeral pyre still smoulder on ?

I shall be glad when all my days are done
To make an end of Hope and Fear and Grief—
As the kind Earth takes back the fallen leaf,
So may she take, and keep, this weariest one.

SHADOWS

OLD griefs remembered still, how strange they seem,
Down Life's long vista viewed through unveiled
eyes—
Naught but the phantom fabric of a dream,
Only the shadow of a bird that flies.

RHODANTHE; ON HERSELF, GROWN OLD

I AM the monument of fair things slain,
The living tomb of Beauty and of Youth :
Small tenderness hast thou, O Time, or ruth,
That these should perish and myself remain.

HODIERNÆ ROSÆ

MY eyes are faded, but yours shine so clear.
Looking on you I take no thought of grief—
I wonder if the new-blown roses cheer
Yesterday's roses, withering leaf on leaf.

THE CAGE

AMID the medley of ironic things
We break our hearts upon from age to age
Glimmers a question,—Had the bird no wings
Who would have taken thought to build a cage?

THE FLOWER AND THE LEAF

STILL, as we sow and reap and gleam,
Behold the tilth Life's Garden grows;
Joy a red rose that blooms and goes,
Grief the one leaf that's ever green.

THE PROMISED LAND

ONLY cold clouds and vaporous summits chill,
Gilt by the sun, above the Downs' green dome:
How fair the dream when we beheld them still
As hills of Heaven beyond the hills of home,

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